

Kadokawa Tsubasa Bunko

角川つばさ文庫

Ace Phoenix Wright Attorney

Turnabout Idol

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Character Introductions

W
Tracy
wright



A magician girl who was adopted by Phoenix. Bright and cheerful!

W
Phoenix
wright



An attorney armed with an innate sense of justice and the belief to defend his clients in court. Head of the Wright Anything Agency.

C
Athena
Cykes



A new attorney at the Wright Anything Agency. Hates losing and is prone to act purely on her emotions.

J
Apollo
Justice



A hot blooded attorney whose loud voice echoes throughout the courtroom. Works at the Wright Anything Agency.

E
Miles
Edgeworth



A genius prosecutor who has faced Phoenix many times in court. Currently works as Chief Prosecutor at the top of the prosecutor's office.

B
Simon
Blackquill

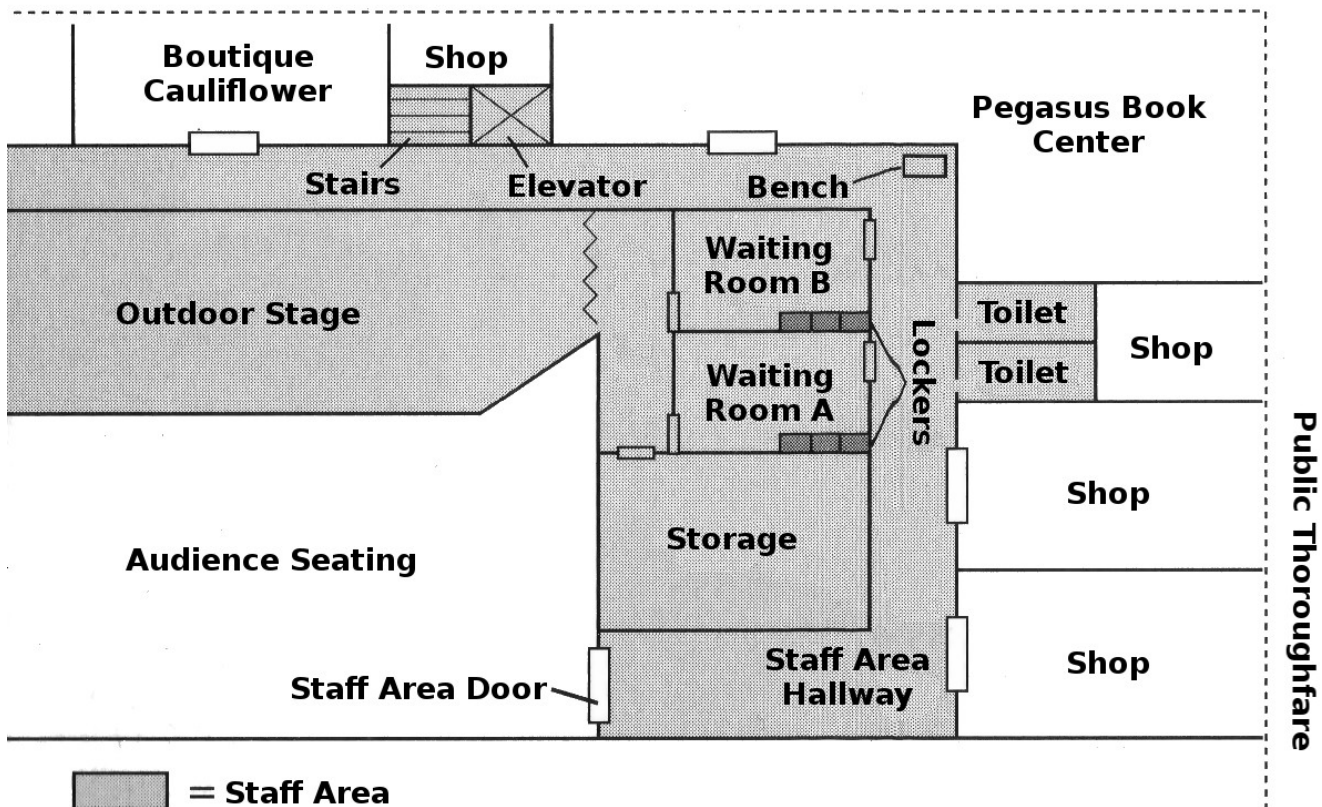


A prosecutor who uses all means available to get defendants declared guilty. Was formerly convicted on death row.

P**Sebastian
Porter**Melody's
manager.**O****Beau
Owens**Pegasus Town's
owner.**U****Wade
Kulfaskul**Self proclaimed
comedy artist.**C****Melody
Cutter**An idol about
to get her big
break.**R****Harriet
Rush**A company
employee at
Pegasus Town.**L****Fabio
Lewis**A boutique employee
who won't shut up
about fashion.**K****Reed
Knight**An unsociable
book shop
employee.

PEGASUS TOWN MAP

Public Thoroughfare



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Chapter 1. A job at Pegasus Town

[June 18, 12:15 PM: Pegasus Town]

The sky above was perfectly serene, a sight for sore eyes.

The kind of sky that is treasured right before the rainy season. Today is Sunday. Pegasus Town was crowded with families.

This is a new shopping mall that opened only last year. The sizable premises include a wide shopping area and a food court as well as an event stage and movie theatre.

On both sides of the brick paved path, there were boutiques and other stores, various places that girls typically enjoy.

Athena had been looking around for a while. She may be a genius who became a qualified lawyer at the age of 18, but she was still just an ordinary girl at heart. She had a clear interest in shopping...

“There's so much to choose from, Mr. Wright! Ice cream over there, chocolate over here, it all looks delicious!”

... She prefers food to sex appeal.

“That line is huge. You'd have to wait... about an hour to reach the front!”

“I hate to tell you this, Athena. But we don't have time to be lining up for an hour.”

“I know that.”

Despite saying that, Athena still wished she could have ice cream.

Trucy, who was walking a few steps ahead, turned around and spoke.

“We can line up after the event is over, Athena. I'd like to have some too.”

“Yeah, let's do it!”

“You want some too, right Daddy?”

With Trucy looking up at me, I was lost for an answer. I mean, I like ice cream, but not enough to spend an hour lined up waiting for it.

Apollo offered a helping hand.

“While you girls get some ice cream, we'll just wander around a bit. There's some large book stores and CD shops here, so we can kill time there.”

Whew. I'm glad Apollo was here. If I was on my own, I'd have been stuck in line for an hour.

Trucy and Athena replied with resignation.

“Despite coming all the way to Pegasus Town, Daddy and Polly only care about killing time...”

“It's such a waste!”

Good grief. I'd say waiting in line a whole hour just for ice cream is a bigger waste of time.

I'm Phoenix Wright. I work as a defence attorney.

The title on my business card says “Wright Anything Agency – Chief”. It used to be called “Wright & Co. Law Offices”, but as a result of certain circumstances... the name became what it is today.

It may lack the dignity of the old name, but it doesn't really bother me. In the harsh world of the law, what matters isn't your title, but your track record.

Today, the members of the office and I have come to Pegasus Town together. Although it's not just for fun. This is business, not pleasure.

Pegasus Town has a large outdoor stage where they hold weekly events. Trucy is performing in today's event, and as the chief I'm here with her.

Trucy is a magician working for the “Wright Anything Agency” and also my daughter. That said, we're not related by blood. A number of years ago, there was a certain incident and I ended up adopting her.

The one currently having a cheerful conversation with Trucy is Athena Cykes. I took her on as my assistant about a year ago. Through Europe's advanced placement system (a system where you study at higher grades than your age level), this unique genius girl became a lawyer at the young age of 18. Normally she's just the cheerful and slightly airheaded Athena, but she has a real presence when put into a courtroom. She's an ever reliable assistant.

And walking next to me is Apollo, Apollo Justice. As a lawyer he's still a little lacking in experience, but won't lose to anyone when it comes to enthusiasm. His bright demeanour and his uncrushable will are always helping me out.

These three are my trusted companions. Together with Athena and Apollo, we're always taking on breathtaking court cases, but...

Today is an easy day. I said we're here for work, but not as attorneys, as chief of the “Wright Anything Agency”, I'm just here to see Trucy perform a magic show.

The event should last about an hour. After that, while Trucy and Athena get ice cream, Apollo and I can visit some book stores and CD shops, perhaps even leisurely drink some tea at a cafe.

Then, we can all have a nice dinner and head home. Everything is set up for us to have a great day.

– Or so I thought.

However, in the end, Trucy and Athena never got the chance to line up for their ice cream.

[June 18, 12:30 PM: Pegasus Town – Staff Area]



Trucy and I went our separate way from Apollo and Athena, and headed for the waiting room for performers. I would have been fine going with the others to find seats among the audience, but Trucy insisted “You’re the boss Daddy, you have to meet the event staff!” to me.

The waiting room was in the staff area. Using a card key that had been provided to us in advance, we entered the staff door and went down the hallway.

Compared to the bright and heavily decorated shopping mall, the staff area could be

described as “the other side”. It's only natural, but there were no decorations whatsoever, it was downright dreary.

On the right hand side of the corridor, iron doors were lined along the wall. I think they're the back entrances to shops. I'm sure it's busy back here in the early morning before business hours, bringing in new stock and such, but right now the corridor contained no signs of life. There's also two performances other than Trucy's today. An idol singer and a comedian, I heard.

When we enter the waiting room, there are three other people already inside. A chubby man and a girl who was looking down at the wall. As well as a young man chewing on some gum.

The first one to speak to us was the chubby man. He was probably somewhere around my age.

“Ah, ah, you must be Trucy Wright! Hello, a pleasure to meet you! I am the manager of Melody Cutter, who you'll be performing alongside today, my name is Seb Porter. I am looking forward to today's performance!”

He spoke in an excited manner and presented his business card. I offered my business card in return.

“Phoenix Wright of the Wright Anything Agency. Nice to meet you.”

“Anything... Agency?”

Mr. Porter's eyes widened. I'm used to this reaction now. I usually just let it slide, but...

Trucy followed up speaking in a cheerful tone.

“We're both a talent agency and a law office! No, in fact we're more than that. Finding lost items, walking dogs, we do it all!”

“Hu... Huh...?”

“If anything ever troubles you, come straight to us! The Wright Anything Agency will handle anything that comes!”

... Good grief.

Trucy would make a much better chief than I do.

Mr. Porter looked around awkwardly, before forcing a polite smile.

“That's... Huh, well... I'm embarrassed to admit that I only work managing talent...”

No. That's perfectly normal.

Mr. Porter had the girl who was looking down turn around so he could introduce her to us.

“This is our agency's top idol, Melody Cutter.”

The girl lifted her head.

She had long chestnut hair, slightly wavy.

Her calm face was quite pretty. Of course, to become an idol singer at all, being cute is a necessity... But that's not all there is to it, there was some kind of shadow within her large eyes. She was an incredible beauty.

“... Pleased to meet you.”

Ms. Cutter spoke in a fading voice, before looking down again.

The outfit she wore was a bright orange sleeveless dress. Despite this, the girl herself left a dark impression.

... She's such a cute girl, but... I suppose an idol singer's life must be harder than I thought... I instinctively felt sympathy for her.

And then, the man chewing the gum cut in with his own voice.

He wore a green shirt and a yellow parka, as well as a pair of jeans with a number of tears. He was tall, somewhat handsome and the kind of guy who tends to rub people the wrong way...

He spoke in a peculiar manner, like he was wrapping his tongue around something.

“I'm Wade Ukulfaskul. But I'm sure you knew that. I'm a super popular comedy artist!”

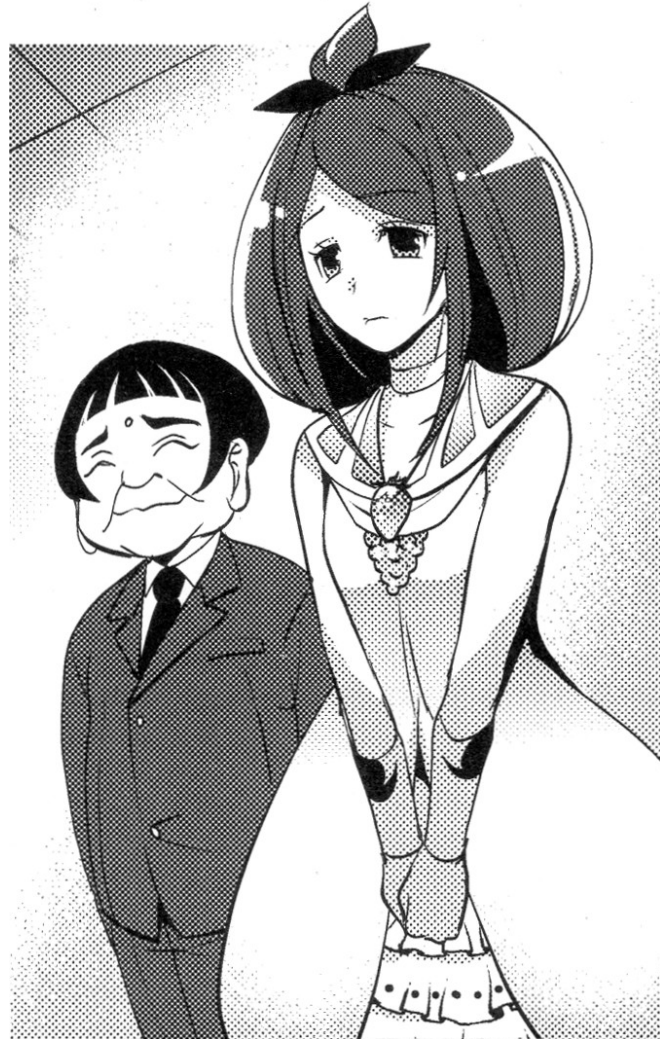
“... Huh.”

That's a hard to say name...

Mr. Ukulfaskul brushed aside his long fringe and continued in a haughty tone.

“Ah, I don't do autographs. I suppose I can just this once, since you insist. Only one per person. But since you're cute, I'm willing to let you have three instead.”

The man shamelessly put an arm around Trucy's shoulder.



I was about to go off on this guy – But before I could, Trucy shook his arm off and moved to the other side of the room.

She then removed the blue silk hat she always wore and bowed politely as she spoke.

“I'm Trucy Wright, a magician. A pleasure to work with you.”

She may be my daughter, but I'm impressed by her professionalism. She really doesn't need me here to look after her at all...

Then something happened.

The door opened and a short man entered.

He wore a well tailored suit, an elegant fellow. I'd guess his age was probably around 50. He had well combed hair with grey streaks, a man with no chinks in his armour.

The man looked at us with a gentle smile.

“I apologise for my lateness, everyone. I'm the owner of this shopping mall, Owens.”

I was somewhat surprised. I never thought the owner himself would be the one to greet us.

Mr. Owens pulled his business card from his suit pocket with his left hand. It was this moment that I realised that his right hand was covered in bandages.

It looked worse than just a light injury. The bandages covered right from his wrist up to the palm of his hand.

Mr. Owens spoke up, having noticed my line of sight.

“Ah, this? I was using the kitchen knife while cooking last night and cut myself.”

“Looks nasty.”

“I cut the base of my thumb. I think it may have reached the bone, quite nasty indeed...”

... It's painful just hearing about it.

Mr. Owens awkwardly exchanged business cards with his left hand as he spoke.

“Thank you for participating in today's event here at Pegasus Town. I'm a huge fan of all three of you. I've been wanting to have you appear here for a long time now. Having you all is like a wish come true.”

Mr. Owens first turned to Trucy.

“Ms. Trucy Wright. Your magic is truly astounding. I especially like the magic panties trick where you pull all manner of things out of your underwear! I love that one.”

“Thank you very much.”

Trucy's face immediately brightened. The magic (or as Apollo would say “panties trick”)

where she made various items appear and disappear from a giant pair of panties, was the greatest skill in her repertoire.

If you ask me, I'd say that Trucy is at an age where she probably shouldn't be flashing her panties in public. But Trucy holds such pride in this magic that I feel I can't really ask her to stop.

Mr. Owens returned to speaking in a formal manner as he continued.

"In fact, Trucy. Next month we're planning a full scale magic show. I was hoping to perhaps invite you back for that event as well."

"Eh...?"

"We've also invited famous magicians from overseas, it should be a magnificent show. What do you say, Trucy?"

"Sounds great!"

Trucy was totally on board. I was naturally in complete agreement. Increasing Trucy's profile was always something to be glad about.

Mr. Owens gave her the date and Trucy immediately pulled out her schedule book. However upon reaching that page, she sighed.

"Ah... I can't do that day. I'm already booked for an event in the shopping district..."

"I see... What a shame."

Pegasus Town's event would be much bigger than the small one in the local shopping district, but... She's already made a promise, so she can't back out. Trucy and Mr. Owens promised "Next time, definitely." with each other.

Next up, Mr. Owens looked to Ms. Cutter.

"Melody Ms. Cutter, I was astounded the first time I saw you on stage. Cutting fruit into decorative shapes while you sing, a truly unique performance! It must take a lot of practice?"

"..."

Ms. Cutter looked down without answering. Her manager Mr. Porter answered in her place.

"Of course. After all, she has to wield such a large knife on stage!"

He picked up a knife lying on the dressing table. It was a large knife kept in a nice sheath. The blade was at least 20 centimetres long... If you include the handle, it'd easily be 30 centimetres. It was certainly flashy for a stage prop.

Mr. Owens's eyes widened.

“Wow... Incredible. The knife is even more impressive when seen up close.”

“Even the slightest mistake could lead to disaster. That's why she always practices at least three hours a day.”

“Three hours! That's incredible.”

“Melody is an incredibly hard worker. I'm sure you're aware, but Melody's father is the legendary pro boxer Upton Cutter. I'm sure she takes a lot after her father...”

“Mr. Porter.”

Ms. Cutter interrupted her manager with a soft voice. It seemed this was a topic she didn't want to be discussed.

Mr. Porter wiped some sweat from his brow with a handkerchief and placed the knife back where he got it from.

Next, Mr. Owens spread his arms as he turned to Mr. Ukulfaskul.

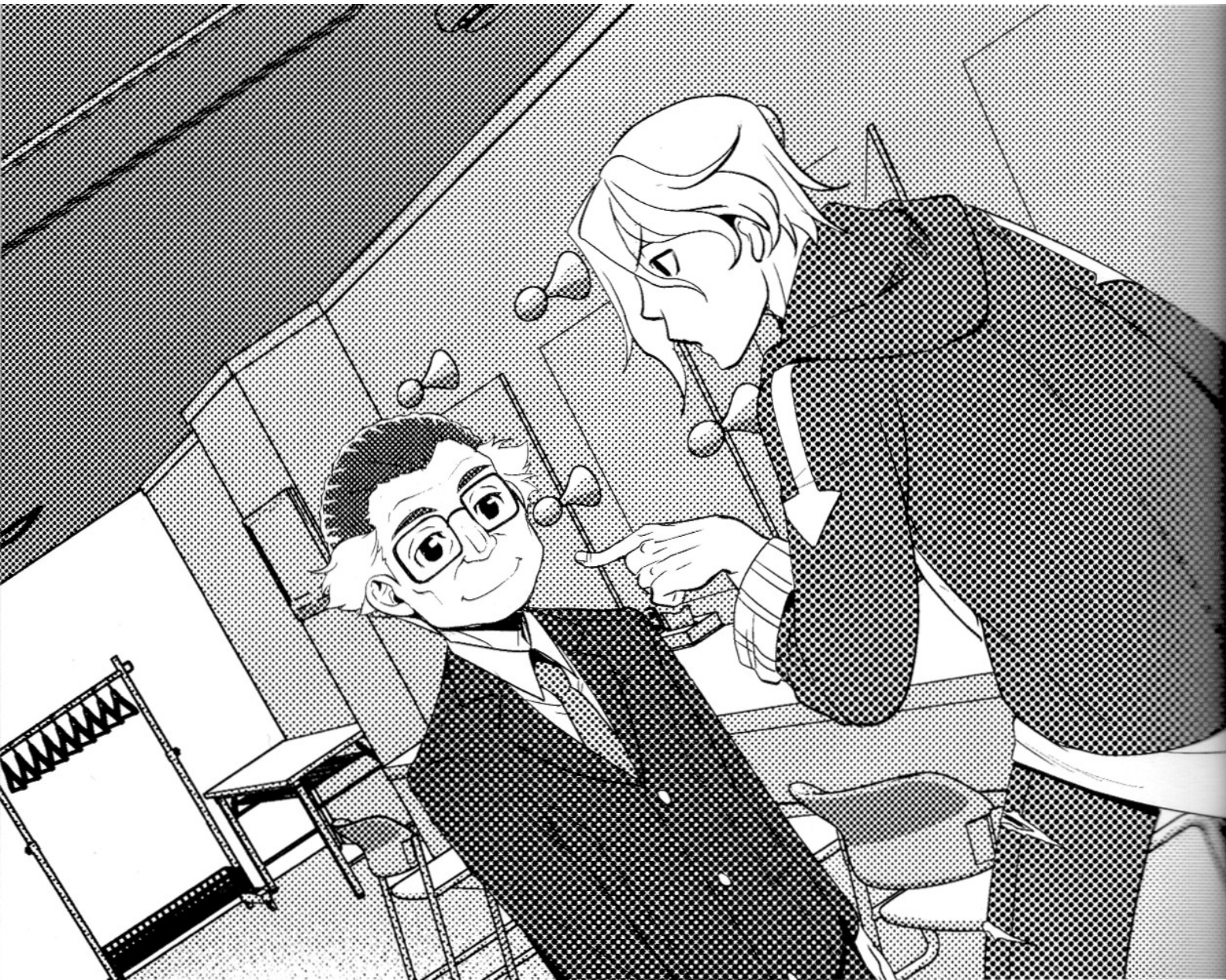
“Mr. Wade Ukulfaskul! I love your jokes! The first time I saw you I burst out laughing! I've never laughed as hard in my life as I have at your material.”

Mr. Ukulfaskul looked full of himself, “Heh.” he laughed scornfully.

“I know, pops. My material isn't something you just laugh at though. My performances aren't just comedy, they're art. I'm no mere performer, I'm a comedy artist.”

He's certainly rude for someone who just received a compliment.

I haven't liked this comedian from the start, but my opinion of him just got even worse.



But Mr. Owens maintained his unfaltering smile as he nodded without even a hint of distaste.

“Indeed, right you are. The ability to turn comedy into an art! You're leading us into a new era of comedy.”

“I'll be sure to captivate the entire audience today. You should look forward to seeing it.”

“I'd love to... But unfortunately, I'm afraid I won't be watching today...”

Mr. Owens's expression suddenly clouded.

“Some urgent work has come up. I'll have to be heading back to my office soon.”

“Eh? You mean you won't be seeing my comedy art then?”

“Indeed. I was looking forward to seeing the three of you on stage more than anyone else too... Quite disappointing.”

Mr. Owens frowned.

“Unfortunately I can't put off the work, but as long as the customers enjoy themselves, I'll

be satisfied. I heard from the staff earlier that we've apparently already got a full house.”

“Of course. Who wouldn't want to see me?”

“... Of all the days to be buried in work.”

Mr. Owens slumped his shoulders in disappointment.

“Anyway, I won't be there to see the performances, but I wish you all the best. We have two waiting rooms prepared. Room A, the room we're in now, is here for Trucy and Melody. Mr. Ukulfaskul has Room B, right next to this one. Bathrooms are just across the hallway. Since the general public are unable to access the staff area here, feel free to relax. Now, if you'll excuse me...”

Mr. Owens bowed his head.

I spoke up.

“I'll be going too. I was planning to watch the show from the audience.”

“I see. Well then...”

Mr. Owens opened the door and Mr. Ukulfaskul and I stepped into the hallway with him. Mr. Ukulfaskul whistled terribly as he went to the waiting room next door and slammed the door as he went in.

He didn't even bother saying goodbye. He really is an arrogant jerk...

Mr. Owens wasn't bothered at all and spoke up with his usual cheerful smile.

“Mr. Wright, you must be Trucy's father. I envy you for having such a fine daughter.”

“You flatter me... Haha.”

I'd been trying to avoid smiling too much, but hearing such praise for Trucy, I broke into a large grin. She was an incredibly capable 16 year old, intelligent and a successful magician. I'm proud to call Trucy my daughter.

Mr. Owens then looked down sadly.

“I lost my own family last year... Ever since then, I've been on my own...”

I was shocked to hear that.

Now that I think about it, he did mention that he “cut myself with a kitchen knife while cooking” earlier.

So his wife has passed away. And he has to cook for himself since he lives on his own.

Mr. Owens lifted his head and attempted to disarm the solemn atmosphere.

“Ah... I'm sorry! I shouldn't be boring you with such details...”

“It's fine...”

“Thank you so much for today. As a result, we've got a full house. I'm glad all these arrangements have paid off.”

“You planned today's event personally, Mr. Owens?”

I spoke without thinking. These kinds of events usually have a dedicated planner, it's rare for the owner themselves to be directly involved.

Mr. Owens nodded with a smile.

“I was once a performer in my youth.”

“A performer...?”

“Indeed. I never had any luck though, so I gave up fairly quickly...”

Mr. Owens covered his eyes in embarrassment.

“But even now, I have the desire to cheer on the next generation. Here at Pegasus Town we plan to showcase many young artists in our events. Melody, Trucy, Mr. Ukulfaskul... I wish to make this a place where young people like them from all fields of entertainment are able to showcase themselves.”

Mr. Owens spoke with great passion.

I nodded with a smile. It's nice to know that Trucy and the others have people like him supporting them.

“I'd better be going now. The elevator is undergoing maintenance from one o'clock, so I better get back to the office before they start. Oh, I better rush...”

Mr. Owens and I both checked our watches. 12:55.

“If you'll excuse me.”

I turned my back on Mr. Owens and walked off.

Chapter 2. Event Start

[June 18, 12:57 PM: Pegasus Town, Outdoor Stage Seating]

When I opened the door at the end of the long hallway and stepped out, I was already right next to the audience seating by the outdoor stage. It was already a huge success with standing room only.

“Mr. Wright! Over here!”

Athena shouted out to me.

I looked in the direction of the voice, I could see Athena and Apollo waving their arms from some seats near the front.

I went and sat in the seat they saved for me.

“So Mr. Wright, what are today's costars like?”

Athena immediately enquired.

“Right. There's Melody Cutter, the idol and also Wade Uku...”

“Melody is so cute!”

Athena clasped her hands together, cutting me off mid-sentence. It seems she has no interest whatsoever in Mr. Ukulfaskul.

“You know about her, Athena?”

“Of course! Melody is an idol undergoing her big break right now.”

I see. I'm totally ignorant about the world of show biz.

Apollo opened his mouth.

“I don't know much, but I heard she cuts fruit while singing?”

“She's not just cutting. She makes swans out of apples, goldfish out of papayas, she's basically a fruit artist. It's amazing!”

And for that she spends three hours a day practising. She's a real hard worker.

“She's great at both singing and dancing, she has a stylish figure. And she's always so cheerful. I always feel better whenever I see Melody's huge smile.”

“... Eh!? Cheerful!?”

I asked almost instinctively.

Athena stared at me blankly.

“Yeah, I mean she's always super cheerful, isn't she? She's been on all kinds of variety shows lately. I'm sure she must have been making all kinds of fun jokes in the waiting room,

right?”

“Ah... Right... I mean...”

I stumbled over my words.

... I didn't expect that. The Ms. Cutter I met in the waiting room was a quiet shadowy girl.

That gloomy girl is probably her true self. It must be a lot of effort for her to play such a cheerful character on stage and TV. A real trooper...

“There's one more performer... Uh... Wade Ukulfaskul, is it? Never heard of him.”

Apollo spoke looking at the event flier. Athena nodded as well.

“First I've heard of him too. Mr. Wright, what's he like?”

“Uuuuh...”

I can't just call him a jerk. I'll bluff my way around this.

“He's very self confident. The owner highly recommends his performance.”

“I see. Looking forward to it!”

The curtain raised as the announcer began speaking. The noisy crowd became quiet.

“Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to today's Pegasus Town Special Live Show! We've got hilarious comedy and bewitching magic, along with the highly popular fruit cutting idol! A wide variety of entertainment!”

A jaunty tune played as the three performers for today came on stage.

Loud cheers and applause came from the audience. There were a lot of cheers for Ms. Cutter, but I heard a good number calling Trucy's name as well.

“Hiiii everyone, good to see you—! Welcome to Pegasus Town—!”

Ms. Cutter was the first to grab the mic. I could hear the deep voices of her fans shouting “Woaaaaah” “Melodyyyyy”.

“Thank you everyone—! I'm so happy to be appearing alongside these two today—! Thanks for your support!”

As she gave a positively glittering smile, the crowd let out another great cheer.

... Just as Athena said, she's super cheerful. What is this? It's like she's a completely different person than the girl I met in the waiting room.

Trucy took the mic next.

“I'm Trucy Wright. Today I'll be astounding you with some of my best magic! Look forward to it!”

Another round of cheers and applause followed.

“I'm... really in no need of an introduction. Wade Ukulfaskul, I cut through the chains of reason, a comedy artist from out of this world. Heh, look forward to seeing me.”

I heard a “Kyaa” from somewhere within the crowd. It seems he actually does have fans. He may be a jerk, but he's reasonably handsome...

The three of them had a light talk about today's event. Or rather, Ms. Cutter and Trucy had a conversation and Mr. Ukulfaskul was left out.

Ms. Cutter was the one to wrap up the opening talk.

“It's about time we got started! Enjoy the show, everyone!”

Ms. Cutter and Trucy waved to the audience as they exited the stage. Mr. Ukulfaskul was left as the top batter.

He immediately started his comedy act... But...

“Athena. Is your face okay?”

Somewhat concerned, I whispered to Athena sitting in the chair to my right.

Her face had been deadpan like that of a Japanese noh mask for a while now. Her eyes were like that of a dead fish.

Athena looked at me with her dead fish eyes and spoke.

“What do you mean... is my face okay...?”

“You're kinda... lacking any human expression...”

“I have no idea whatsoever how I should react to this...”

Athena wasn't the only one. Practically the whole audience's faces were deadpan with dead fish eyes.

“I don't know... I just don't, I've never seen anything so dull in my life...”

“This is supposedly... supposed to be hilarious comedy.”

“I haven't been this bored since my comparative law studies lectures at law school in Europe...”

That's our Athena. A real academic genius.

No, this isn't the time to be impressed by that.

Mr. Ukulfaskul's comedy was dull enough to leave you in a stupor. Wade Ukulfaskul had absolutely no shame as he performed. Even the lame outdated jokes the old man at the greengrocer near my office makes were funnier than this.

In the seat to my left, I could hear light snoring... Apollo...

The only thing Mr. Ukulfaskul had going for him was that he didn't let the audience's silence discourage him. Either that or he was too engrossed in himself that he didn't even notice the audience's reaction.

"Now everyone, have you laughed enough yet? Hang on to your seats, 'cause I've been saving this one!"

Mr. Ukulfaskul span around and pointed a finger at the audience.

"So this happened yesterday. I was buying a \$20 shirt, so I pulled out a \$50 note. Then I got \$80 change. That's right, the guy in the shop mistook my \$50 note for a \$100 note! Of course, I pretended not to notice and took the cash. On the way home, I stepped in dog poop. It must have been..."

He pointed up in the sky with his right hand, placed his left hand on his heart and got down on his left knee.

"Divine punishment!?"

He shrieked and collapsed.

... That was apparently the best joke he had.



I can't even comment on this. His few fans screamed out “Kyaa” and “Wadeee”, while the rest of the audience were divided between giving him applause. This is the kind of applause that seems to say thank god that's finally over.

Mr. Ukulfaskul left the stage and Trucy entered. The whole crowd seemed to breathe a sigh of relief.

Trucy's performance was great as always. While some light music played, she turned her magic wand into a scarf, returned a shredded newspaper to its original state and other such tricks.

Of course, she also had her trademark “Magic Panties”, which really drew attention from the audience. The once cold audience were now excited. There were even fans screaming things like “Trucyyyy!” “You're totally the super awesomest in the galaxy, Trucyyyy!” How long has she had such passionate fans like this... I have no idea...

“That's our Trucy! A real entertainer!”

Athena's face had changed back from a noh mask to its usual full of expression self. Apollo woke up too. What a relief.

Once our Trucy's hugely successful performance ended, Ms. Cutter was up next.

Ms. Cutter came out to huge applause and cheers... However.

Something about her seemed off. She no longer had the lively expression she had at the opening. Her presence was like that of a shadow, just as it had been when we met in the waiting room. She seemed to be forcing out a smile, but her eyes were empty...

The performance began and she started dancing in time with the music. But her movements were stiff.

“Huh? Is something wrong with Melody?”

Athena whispered.

“Her movement is strange. And her expression is dark.”

“Nothing like earlier.”

“I've never seen Melody like this before. Even her outfit is different...”

“Her outfit?”

“She always wears a jacket with a fruit motif when on stage. It's studded with fruits like grapes and oranges, its cute. I wonder why she isn't wearing it...?”

I don't recall ever seeing it. In the waiting room and during the opening talk, she was wearing a sleeveless dress.

This was more than just a missing jacket. Something was clearly wrong with Ms. Cutter. She continually messed up her lyrics. Her choreography was stiff. And also—
“She hasn't got her knife! What's up with that?”

Athena clasped her hands and leant forward with concern.

“Knife... Oh, for cutting the fruit with...?”

I recalled seeing Mr. Porter showing off a large knife in the waiting room.

“It's Melody's trademark! She can't do her fruit carving performance without it!”

The crowd grew restless.

Ms. Cutter picked up a piece of fruit from a table, and unable to do anything to it without her knife, put it back down on the table. As a result, the flow of her dance was interrupted and she kept stopping and starting.

“Melody... What now...?”

Athena whispered, almost as if she was dealing with the problem herself.

My cell phone began to vibrate. I'd put on mute so it wouldn't disturb the show, but I still be notified if I received a message.

I discretely checked my phone. It was a text. Addressed to both me and Trucy...?

The sender was the event manager from the local shopping district.

“Sorry! The event we arranged for Trucy to appear at next month has been cancelled due to certain circumstances with the head of the council! We're so sorry—!”

... Ah. The head of the council is going to be busy with a game of golf or checkers then.

It's cancelled, huh... Well, that's fine...

... Hm? Wait a sec.

This means she can appear in that “Magic Show” Mr. Owens mentioned, right? I believe it was a huge event that had even invited even foreign magicians. And if Trucy could appear in a show like that...

I'd better let him know asap. Before owner Owens asks another magician instead. I'm sure Trucy will be excited too.

I whispered to Apollo and Athena.

“I gotta go for a bit.”

“Eh? What is it, Mr. Wright?”

“I’ll be right back.”

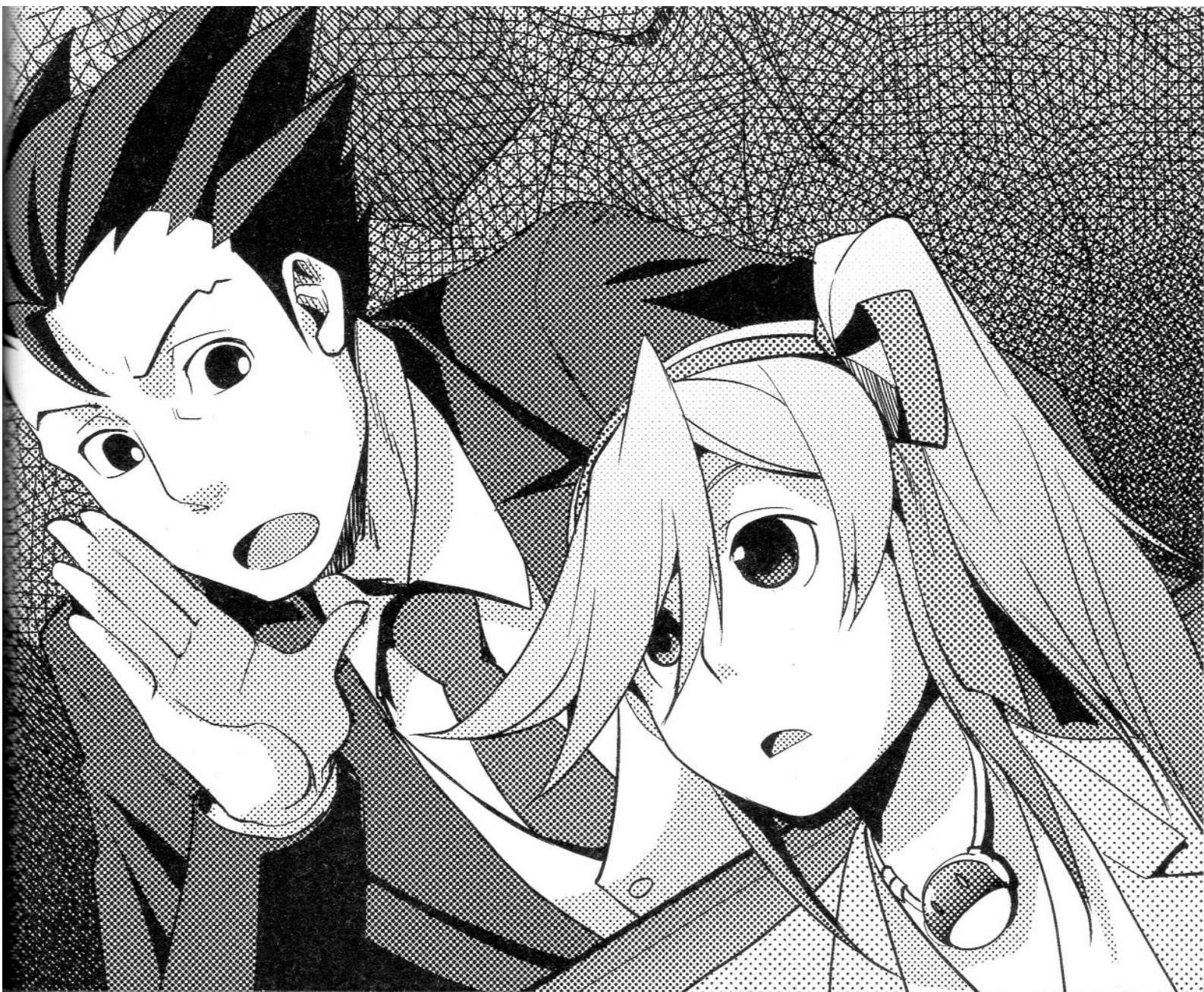
I stood up from my seat.

I opened the door from earlier once again with my card key and went into the staff area.

Once the door closed, the noise from outside vanished, as if it had been an illusion.

There was no sign of life in the hallway. Only a mascot suit lay in the corner. Since it's not a weekday, it's probably for some event.

I walked down the hallway towards the elevator, but...



[June 18, 1:45 PM: Pegasus Town, Staff Area]

The elevator had a note saying “Elevator in maintenance, 1:00-1:50 PM” stuck to it.

Come to think of it, Mr. Owens did mention this. That the elevator was undergoing maintenance from 1:00 PM.

I checked my watch. 1:45 PM.

It's only another five minutes before they finish. Oh well. I guess I can wait.

I was standing there zoning out, when a cleaning lady came around the corner. Her hair was tucked under her cap and she was wearing a large mask. She was wearing a pair of rubber gloves and carrying a heavy looking bucket. She glanced at me briefly before looking away with a sigh. She seemed to be tired from a lot of hard work.

That was when I realised something important. I was planning to go see Mr. Owens, but what floor is his office on...?

Astounded by my own stupidity, I spoke to the cleaner.

“Excuse me, I'd like to ask you something.”

“...”

“What floor is the owner's office on?”

The cleaner didn't answer. She looked down in silence.

... Huh? Maybe she didn't hear me. It's possible she could be hard of hearing.

Maybe I should try asking in a louder voice... I thought.

“... I think, it's the seventh floor. Yeah... Right... Seventh floor.”

It was a soft voice. And the mask made it even harder to hear her clearly.

Anyway, I now knew where the owner's office was. I thanked her.

Seventh floor, huh... There's stairs here, but it'd be tough climbing up that far. I'll just wait quietly for the elevator to come back in service.

The maintenance was soon over and the elevator came down. Both I and the cleaner got inside. I pressed the button for level 7 and she pressed the one for level 10.

The elevator stopped on the second floor and two women got on.

Since this is a staff elevator, the general public can't use it. The two of them appear to be employees of the shopping mall. One was thin and the other a little chubby.

“Argh! It's not in here—!”

The thin one looked around the floor of the elevator, speaking in a voice sounding as if

she was about to cry.

The chubby one spoke back sceptically.

“Are you sure you dropped it in this elevator?”

“Yeah, probably. There's nowhere else it could've been...”

“Why did you drop it in an elevator?”

“My phone rang. Then as soon as I got it out of my bag, my pass case must have fallen out.”

“Why didn't you notice back then?”

“Because I was distracted by my phone... Ugh, what a shock. I only just bought that pass case too~!”

“Ah, that one you showed me recently? The pink one with the little black cat on it...”

“Yeah, that's it. I really liked it too!”

It seems this woman lost something inside the elevator.

She was distracted by her phone, huh? That happens to me too, I'll have to be careful.

“What was in it?”

“My boutique point card, my book store point card, my drug store point card, my beauty salon point card...”

“Those are all just point cards. You didn't have anything important in there? Like your train pass or credit card?”

“They weren't in there.”

“No biggie then. There's no point worrying about point cards.”

“There's lots of points! I almost had 100 points for the book store!”

“Maybe someone picked it up? You can ask management later.”

“Yeah... I hope they have it...”

The next stop was the seventh floor. The two women and I stepped out.

There were a lot of doors in the hallway, and no signs to indicate where to go.

I called out to the two women who were already walking away.

“Excuse me, which way is the owner's office?”

“Eh?”

The pair turned around. The chubby one spoke to me.

“The owner's office? You're on the wrong floor.”

“Eh? But the cleaner told me it was the seventh floor...”

“Ah, the cleaning staff are contractors, so they aren't always knowledgeable about these things. The owner's office is on the top floor.”

“Eeh...”

Gimme a break.

By the time I turned back around, the elevator door was already shut.

By the time the elevator came back to the seventh floor, it was almost 2:00.

This was taking longer than I'd expected. The event ends at 2:00. There's no way I'll make it back before it's over.

I should probably contact Apollo after this...

I found where I was going without any trouble. An imposing door with the words “Owner's Office” written above it in golden letters.

I knocked and immediately got a response.

“Come in.”

I opened the door.

It was a large office. There was a rug spread out on the floor as well as a lounge suite. A fine desk was by the window where Mr. Owens was sitting in his chair.

Mr. Owens looked at me with surprise as he got up.

“Oh, it's Mr. Wright. Sorry... I thought you were my secretary.”

“No, I should be apologising for barging in on you.”

“Is something the matter?”

“There's something I'd like to discuss...”

I walked towards the desk – and my foot slipped on the floor.

I managed to maintain my balance, barely escaping falling over.

The floor was wet. Looking at it, it seems it had recently been wiped with a wet cloth.

Mr. Owens spoke up.

“Are you okay? I'm so sorry... I spilt some coffee earlier, I'd meant to clean it up properly.”

“Haah...”

“I'm always doing that, careless really. My secretary would scold me if she knew.”

Mr. Owens smiled wryly. At a glance he seems to be the perfect gentleman, but it seems he has his faults after all. I often spill drinks at the agency too, and Trucy gets mad at me. I

feel an affinity with him...

“I was hoping to talk about the event next month you mentioned earlier.”

“The one Trucy had to turn down due to a prior engagement...?”

“It's just been cancelled.”

“Really!? So, will Trucy be able to participate...?”

“Yes, of course. She'd love to.”

“How wonderful. I adore Trucy's magic. I was so disappointed when she turned the event down.”

Mr. Owens grinned ear to ear.

I felt somewhat satisfied with a smile, perhaps also influenced by his compliments.

“Well, I'll be off. We can discuss the details later when I have Trucy with me.”

“Thank you for letting me know, Mr. Wright.”

I was just about to turn and leave.

The phone on the desk rang. Mr. Owens said “Excuse me.” before answering.

I was just leaving the room – but Mr. Owens's words stopped me in my tracks.

“Eh? What? ... Dead!?”

I turned around instinctively. Mr. Owens gripped the receiver tightly with his eyes wide.

“What on earth happened...!? Alright, I'll visit the scene. I'll be there soon.”

Mr. Owens slammed the receiver down and looked at me. His face had become stiff.

“Terrible news, Mr. Wright. The staff just contacted me... Mr. Ukulfaskul was found dead in the waiting room...!”

Chapter 3. I'm not the culprit!

[June 18, 2:07 PM: Pegasus Town, Staff Area]

Mr. Owens and I hopped in the elevator and travelled down to the first floor.

“So what happened? Did Mr. Ukulfaskul have some terminal illness...?”

Despite asking the question out loud, I knew deep down that this death wasn't of natural causes. If the cause of death was an illness, then Mr. Owens wouldn't seem so shaken.

Mr. Owens shook his head and spoke gravely.

“He's been stabbed. By the time the staff found him, he was already dead.”

Stabbed to death... It's even worse than I'd expected.

The wait for the elevator door to open felt agonisingly slow, we then rushed to the waiting room. There were two waiting rooms next to each other, but the one Mr. Ukulfaskul used was “Waiting Room B”.

The moment we opened the door, I was frozen in place.

The floor was drenched in blood. The victim lay there with his limbs twisted in an unnatural manner. The knife was still sticking from his chest.

It was Mr. Ukulfaskul. His eyes were still open wide in shock.

I quickly surveyed the crime scene.

The room had a large table with two chairs. On top of the table, a black bag sat. One of the chairs had a yellow parka hanging on it.

The wall on the right hand side had a dressing table with a mirror, the dressing table had a chair in front of it. Large lockers lined the wall on the left hand side. The feet of Mr. Ukulfaskul's corpse pointed in the direction of a locker. The locker's door was wide open, blood splattered inside.

Several people were already in the room. Trucy and Ms. Cutter were standing by the dressing table. Ms. Cutter was trembling as she looked downward, while Trucy comforted her with an arm around her shoulder.

Beside them standing dumbfounded was Ms. Cutter's manager, Mr. Porter.

Other than them there was a man who appeared to be event staff waiting for Mr. Owens. He gave a flustered explanation of the situation to Mr. Owens. However he was so distressed that it made little sense.

“Daddy...!”

Trucy called out. I walked over to her and Ms. Cutter.

“Trucy! Are you alright!?”

“Yeah, I'm fine. But Melody...”

Ms. Cutter hung her head while trembling like a leaf. Her face was hidden by her long hair, so I couldn't see the expression.

Ms. Cutter struggles to squeeze the words from her throat.

“It wasn't... It wasn't me... I didn't kill him...!”

“... Ms. Cutter?”

“It wasn't me... I don't know anything...”

I stared blankly at Trucy. She softly explained.

“The knife used as the murder weapon...”

“Knife?”

“The one currently stabbed in the body. It's Melody's.”

“...!?”

I recalled Ms. Cutter's time on stage. She didn't have her knife, so she was unable to do her usual fruit carving performance...

I approached the body and crouched to inspect it, being careful not to step in any splattered blood. The murder weapon sticking out of his chest was definitely the knife I saw in the waiting room before the show.

Mr. Porter looked at me. This was obviously quite a shock to him too, his face had gone quite pale.

“We've contacted the police. They should be here any minute.”

“... Who was the first to discover the corpse?”

Trucy was the one to answer my question.

“It was me and Melody. We found him like this when we came back to the waiting room after the show ended.”

“Isn't your waiting room next door? Why did you come into this one?”

“Because Mr. Ukulfaskul never came out on stage.”

Trucy decided that her explanation was too short and expanded on it.

“After Melody's performance, the three of us were supposed to come out on stage and give our farewells to the audience. But Mr. Ukulfaskul never came out. We figured he was probably feeling down since his performance crashed and burned... We figured we should just leave him be until after.”

So after leaving stage, they decided to check up on him and found the waiting room in its current state.

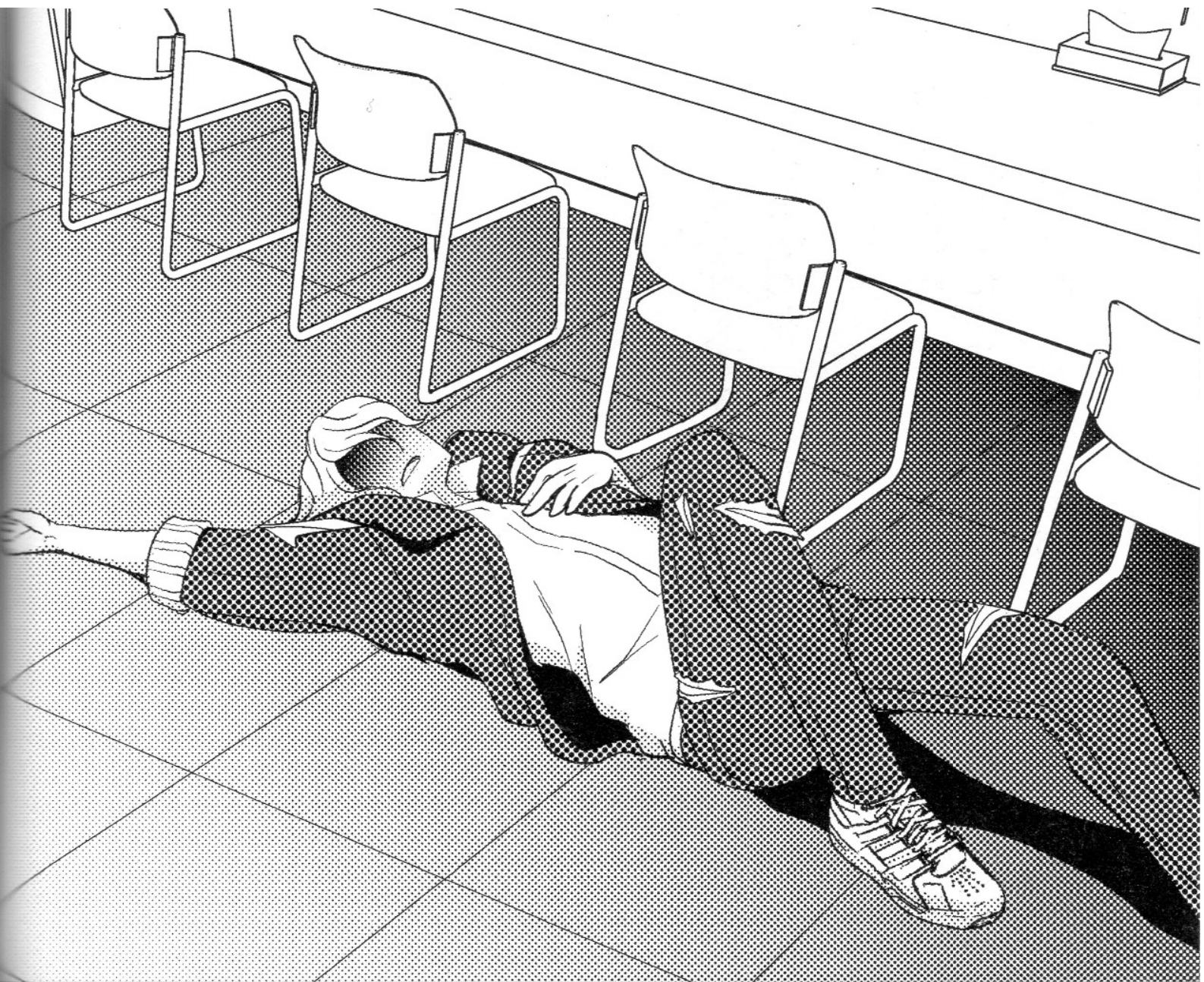
“Nobody's disturbed the crime scene?”

“Of course. We haven't touched a thing. I've been in this room ever since the corpse was discovered, so no one has been able to tamper with the evidence.”

She's certainly my daughter. Totally reliable.

“... Um, Daddy. There's one thing bothering me though.”

Trucy spoke quietly. However since the room was small and quiet as the dead, every living person probably still heard her.



“Mr. Ukulfaskul's pose.”

“His pose?”

“Yeah. His right arm is stretched out, but his left hand is on his chest? Also, both of his knees are bent like they would be if he was kneeling.”

“... Ah.”

I noticed that too when I first saw him. No matter how you look at it, it's not a natural pose.

“It looks kinda like his 'Divine punishment!?' pose.”

“... His what?”

“You saw his act, right Daddy? Mr. Ukulfaskul's favourite joke.”

I took another look at the corpse, dumbfounded.

Trucy was right. The corpse may be lying down face up, but if you were to stand it up maintaining that pose... it'd be exactly the same as that 'Divine punishment!?' pose!

It'd be unnatural for the victim to collapse in this pose after being stabbed. Which means there's only one explanation.

Mr. Ukulfaskul only took that pose after the murdered had already killed him.

“How... How horrendous...!”

Mr. Owens groaned sorrowfully as he buried his face in his hands.

The police soon arrived and began inspecting the crime scene.

When I know one of the detectives, I'm usually able to get permission to join the investigation. But unfortunately there were no familiar faces among the police today.

I had to leave the scene for now. As the ones who discovered the corpse, Trucy and Ms. Cutter remained there.

Along with the rest of the customers, Apollo and Athena were completely ignorant of the incident. They had been under the assumption that since Trucy and I hadn't returned yet we must have been chatting with the event organisers.

We met up in a cafe, as I explained the incident to them I saw the colour drain from their faces.

“A knife in the chest! That's no suicide or accident. It's gotta be murder!”

“You're being too loud, Athena. But yeah, that's 100% a murder case.”

“And Melody's knife was the murder weapon...?”

“It's pretty suspicious.”

Apollo stated calmly. Athena got irritated with her response.

“What... Apollo, you don't seriously think Melody did it!?”

“No. Quite the opposite actually. It'd be crazy to stab someone with a knife that can easily be tracked back to yourself. It'd make you the most obvious suspect.”

“Yeah. I agree.”

“So that means... that someone else stole it?”

Athena lowered her voice as she spoke.

“The real culprit stole Melody's knife and used it as the murder weapon. They want to pin the crime on her!”

Apollo said.

“Nothing's set in stone yet, but something feels off. We should try and investigate.”

“—Right.”

And so, we were all on board.

There was no way we could ignore a murder taking place backstage at an event Trucy was involved in.

Athena made a fist and punched into her other hand. It's the pose she always takes when raring to go.

“Lass uns das machen. Let's do this!”

However— just as we were about to get started, we ran into a wall.

The police announced the murder and arranged to have the customers removed from Pegasus Town.

The once calm shopping mall got caught up in panic, the customers all rushed for the exit.

I wasn't going to be forced out so easily. I tried showing my attorney badge to the police, requesting that I be allowed on the scene, but they bluntly refused.

I probably should have insisted that I was involved with the case and stayed on the scene with Trucy. Well, I guess that was my mistake.

At that moment my phone rang. It was Trucy.

(Daddy? The police just finished questioning me...)

Trucy's voice was hard to hear. She seemed to be talking quietly as to avoid letting anyone around her hear.

(Something terrible has happened.)

“Something terrible? What happened, Trucy?”

(Not over the phone. I'll explain it all in person.)

We decided on a meeting place and ended the call.

“What’s going on with Trucy?”

Apollo asked with concern. I shook my head.

“I'm not sure. Something to do with the case, I'm guessing...”

Anyway, myself, Apollo and Athena rushed to the meeting place.

The entrance hall was in chaos.

To avoid being caught up in the flow of people, Trucy stood in an isolated spot.

“Trucy!”

I called out to her and her shoulders relaxed.

“Daddy...”

“What happened?”

Trucy spoke in a low voice.

“The police arrested Melody as a suspect. I did my best to convince them otherwise, but I couldn't. They took her away.”

“They did that...?”

Of course, Ms. Cutter could be a very important witness. And the knife used as the murder weapon was hers.

But to take her as the main suspect so quickly...

“Have they got anything other than the knife used as the murder weapon?”

As a response to my question, Trucy nodded with a stiff expression.

“They do. The detectives enquired with the shops nearby and came up with some witnesses against her. Two of them.”

“Witnesses...? Who are they...?”

“They're shopkeepers. A book store employee and a boutique employee, they witnessed Melody acting suspiciously.”

“Acting suspiciously...?”

“I don't know the details. I only know what I overheard from the detectives. But the police really sped up at that point... They really settled on Melody as the prime suspect.”

What a situation. I wonder what kind of statement they got?

“Trucy, do you know the witnesses names?”

“Yeah. Mr. Knight from the Pegasus Book Center and Mr. Lewis from Boutique Cauliflower.”

Trucy is reliable as ever. Despite being shaken by this, she still got all the important details.

Athena shouted.

“I'm sure there's some kind of mistake! We should go talk to those witnesses.”

“Yeah. Let's go.”

We went against the tide of people heading for the exit and went back inside the shopping mall.

First up is the 'Pegasus Book Center'.

“Uuum... So it's the book store on the first floor.”

Athena said while spreading out the floor map pamphlet.

This shopping mall is huge. We'd get lost easily without any map.

The map Athena has is for customers, so the staff area isn't marked out.

Although the unmarked passageway would be running behind each of the shops.

I built an accurate picture of the map in my head.

Out of all the shops on the first floor, the Pegasus Book Center takes up the most floor space as a large scale book store. It would be located right on the corner of the staff area. Right next to the waiting rooms.

As we arrived, the store manager was just seeing off the last customer and preparing to close shop.

“Excuse me...”

As I spoke up, the manager turned and replied.

“I'm sorry sir. Due to a major incident, all the stores are closing early. Please come back another time.”

Man, I wonder how many times he's repeated that line. He sounded like a robot.

“No, I'm not a customer. I heard one of the employees here was an important witness...”

“Ah, so you're a cop.”

The manager's tone changed. He's mistaken... but I don't think I'll correct him.

The manager called out to the back of the shop.

“Hey, Reed. It's the cops. They have more questions for you.”

Despite me not saying a single word about that, the manager continued on with his misunderstanding.

A man came out from the back. He looked to be in his mid twenties. He was a serious looking fellow with glasses.

“What do they want to ask... I told them everything already...”

A grumbling voice spoke, but—

His expression changed the moment he saw us.

“Tr... Tr... Tr—...!?”

His expression stretched as he let out a squeaky yell, and immediately fled back into the store.

“Ah, he's running!”

Athena shouted.

“A suspicious character! Let's catch him, Mr. Wright!”

“No, hold it, Athena. He's a witness, not the culprit.”

The manager tilted his neck in perplexment.

“Reed? That's weird. He gave his statement just fine earlier...”

“Excuse us.”

I moved on from the manager and went deeper into the store.

It's practically a maze with all these bookshelves. The store's set up is great for exploring books at your leisure, but not so much for catching up with someone who is running away.

“Why'd he run away? Does he have a guilty conscience for something?”

Athena said.

“Tr, Tr... is what he said. I wonder what he was trying to say?”



“Maybe it was something like 'Tr, tr, trouble!' or 'Tr, tr, tropical juice!'...”

“That doesn't make sense, Athena.”

Having navigated the maze of bookshelves, we reached the deepest part of the large store.

There we found the checkout counter and behind the counter was a large iron door, most likely the back entrance to the staff area.

“That Knight guy has escaped out the back door! After him!”

Athena is totally treating the witness as some kind of suspect. Well, I guess it makes sense with his reaction.

Then something happened just as we came around the counter.

The iron door opened dramatically.

Standing behind it was – not the store employee.

“... What is it?”

The enthusiastic Athena faltered. It wasn't just her though, Apollo, Trucy and myself all took a step back as well.

From behind the iron door came a mascot suit with a giant book for a head. The open book had a pair of bulging eyes and a large mouth.

I've seen this before. It was sitting out in the staff area earlier...

“Ah, I know this thing!”

Trucy spoke up.

“It's Bookington!”

“... Bookington?”

“Yeah. He's a mascot to promote reading. He's an ally of literacy who encourages all the good little kids out there to read more.”

Bookington... For a mascot character, he sure has a fancy name.

“Why is there a mascot character here?”

“Reed is in there.”

The manager who had caught up with us at some point spoke.

“We had an event at the store today. It was called “Play with Bookington!” and we had this costumed character appear. It was a huge hit with the kids.

“Huh... And the witness was the one inside the costume...?”

“Indeed. Reed is surprisingly good in there. He's got a lot of experience with mascot costumes. He's kinda gloomy in person, but once inside his movements become all cute!”

In response to the manager's praise, Bookington wiggled his arms about.

... Cute... Really? If I was a kid, I'd probably cry.

“So why is he wearing the costume now?”

“Dunno... We'll have to ask him ourselves. Reed? Reed, what's up?”

The manager asked, but Bookington put a hand to his mouth to make a “Shhh” pose.

“Oh, I forgot. Bookington can't talk.”

“What do you mean can't talk!?”

“If a mascot character spoke, it'd break the illusion. Reed has never said a single word any time he's wearing the suit.”

“Seriously...”

I never thought that I'd face this kind of situation with a witness.

“Can we get him to come out of the suit now?”

“Dunno. I've tried in the past. Maybe if you negotiate with him.”

... I'm not sure I can negotiate with a mascot that doesn't talk.

Apollo interjected.

“Mr. Wright, we can come back here later, we should try and meet up with the other witness. If we waste all our time here, he might leave before we meet him.”

“... You're right.”

Unfortunately, this is just a waste of time. We're better off seeing the other witness like Apollo suggested.

Leaving the bookshop for later, we headed for the next shop.

“Next is 'Boutique Cauliflower', a store dedicated to romantic fashion for girls... is what it says!”

Athena read from the map's description in an excited tone.

“Athena, we're not here to shop right now.”

“I know that!”

Boutique Cauliflower was the store two doors down from the Pegasus Book Center.

Once again, I mentally formed an image of how it connected to the back passageway not shown on the map.

This store's back door would be in a position on the other side of the elevator and stairs compared to the Pegasus Book Center. It's not all that close to the waiting rooms.

Boutique Cauliflower was also seeing off it's customers and preparing to close shop.

“Um, excuse me...”

I spoke up and a man in a sparkling suit turned around.

“My deepest apologies, sir. Due to an incident taking place, the store is closing early today.”

“No, we aren't customers. We're investigating the incident...”

“Eh? You're police officers? Didn't I already give my statement?”

The man spoke in a fancy tone while adjusting the scarf around his neck.

It seems this is our witness. His name was... Mr. Lewis, right?

“We'd like to go over the statement again. Can you tell us everything you saw?”

I didn't want to go through the trouble of explaining that we weren't police, so I just went with it.

Mr. Lewis quirked an eyebrow. That's when I thought... he's totally suspicious of me.

“You... You're terrible. Most unpleasant.”

“... Huh?”

“This ugly badge, what is it!? It's horrendous!”

Mr. Lewis grabbed my lapel. I was wearing my attorney's badge... proof of my profession.

“Wearing this horrible sparkling badge ruins the look of such a wonderful suit. Why don't people understand basic things like this!?”

“Eh...? Eh... Uh... Well you see... It's really important...”

“And those shoes! I swear, it's like 99 out of every 100 middle aged men wear the same dull shoes!”

“... Eh... Huh...?”

They're fine, aren't they? What's wrong with normal leather shoes?

Mr. Lewis gave an exaggerated shrug and shook his head.

“What you lack is, indeed, a sense of adventure. Your outfit has no coordination! Just look at that cheap looking candy store badge and those overly dull shoes, it's not satisfying!”



“N-no, this badge is really important, and I like these shoes...”

“Just leave it to me. The charismatic fashion adviser Fabio Lewis will take you to the depths of adventure and pick out some fabulously gorgeooooouuuus shoes for you!”

“Hold it right there! I'm not here to buy new shoes!”

I finally cut in to ask a question.

“I heard you're an important witness for the crime?”

“...”

Mr. Lewis clammed up. I decided to press harder.

“What did you see? What did you tell the police? Tell us now.”

Mr. Lewis replied reluctantly.

“... Um, I saw that idol girl entering the waiting room.”

The waiting room, huh... That shouldn't be an issue. It's normal to see a performer like Ms. Cutter enter a waiting room.

“That girl, I saw her sneaking out of one waiting room and into the other one. I hear that's where the murder took place, I was shocked to hear it.”

“Eh...!?”

I felt the need to confirm what he said.

“Hold on a moment. You saw Ms. Cutter enter waiting room B?”

“I don't know which one is A or B, but it was the room the murder took place in.”

Ms. Cutter went from her own waiting room into Mr. Ukulfaskul's one?

What the heck? That's the first I've heard of this!

“What time was this? Do you remember the exact time!?”

Mr. Lewis took another look at my badge. The attorney badge he had decried as horrendous.

“That... isn't a police badge, is it? Which means you aren't police?”

Things could get messy if I explain that I'm a lawyer.

As I hesitated to answer, Mr. Lewis took on a haughty tone.

“So you're a newspaper reporter? Oh, I've let all kinds of important details slip!”

“No, I'm not a journalist...”

“You should have said so sooner! I'm busy! If you want to hear my magnificent testimony, then come to the trial!”

We were forced out of the store.

It seems we won't be getting any further details from him. We'll have to pull back.

Apollo spoke up as we walked through the lifeless shopping mall.

“That was one bombshell of a statement. He says he saw Melody entering the scene of the crime... Geez.”

“Wouldn't you have noticed, Trucy? You shared the same waiting room, right?”

I asked and Trucy shook her head.

“First I've heard of it too. Melody never mentioned anything about it.”

“I see. And if you didn't notice her, then it must have been during your performance...”

“Not necessarily. During both Mr. Ukulfaskul's and Melody's performances, I was on the wing of the stage, I never went back to the waiting room.”

“Eh...!?”

This is also new info to me.

“Since I'd never performed with Mr. Ukulfaskul before, I thought I'd see what his performance was like from the wing of the stage. Then since he bombed so bad... I was really on edge and didn't get a chance to return to the waiting room.”

“R-right...”

“And then Melody seemed somewhat off, so I watched her from the wing of the stage since I was worried about her.”

Which means that between the opening talk and the start of her performance, we have no idea what Ms. Cutter was doing...

“... Um, Daddy.”

Trucy had a serious expression.

“The thing is... When we found Mr. Ukulfaskul's corpse, Melody did something weird.”

“Weird? How so?”

“When we found the body, both of us screamed in surprise, but then Melody approached the corpse unsteadily...”

Trucy gently reached out.

“She was about to touch Mr. Ukulfaskul, around his left breast pocket.”

“Wait, what?”

“I shouted 'Don't touch him!' at her. I figured that it'd be bad if we disturbed the scene. And then she pulled her hand back, but... it's still weird, right?”

Definitely weird. Most people who find a bloody corpse wouldn't immediately want to go touching it.

Maybe she wanted to check if he was still alive? But then she would've checked his wrist for a pulse or seen if he was breathing. Since Mr. Ukulfaskul was stabbed in the chest, the breast pocket on his shirt would be covered in blood. So reaching for that spot...

"Maybe something was in his pocket?"

Apollo said.

In his pocket... huh. Was there something important in there? And did Ms. Cutter know about it...?

"... Have you told the police about this?"

Trucy looked down as she spoke.

"I didn't think I should hide it. But... my statement sounds pretty bad for Melody... Maybe I shouldn't have said anything..."

I shook my head.

"No. You were right to tell the police everything you know. That's part of your role as the discoverer of the corpse.

"... Yeah. I know... But."

Trucy lifted her head. She had an unusually serious look in her eyes.

"I believe in Melody. There's no way she's a killer."

"..."

"I know we only just met today, but we're already friends now. Melody is a nice, kind girl. She'd never kill anyone."

"Trucy..."

"Besides, Melody told me 'My knife and jacket vanished while I wasn't looking'. I bet the culprit stole those things to pin the crime on her!"

"Hold it. Not just her knife, but her jacket was missing?"

"Yeah. That's what she said. She left it hanging on a chair, then when she went to get it it was gone."

"So that's why she didn't wear it during her performance."

Athena said.

The jacket... The knife is one thing, but why take her jacket too?

Trucy pushed for my sympathy.

“Melody clearly stated 'I didn't kill him'. The real culprit is trying to frame her. Please, Daddy. You have to help Melody!”

... I knew that was coming.

Saying she's a nice, kind girl and having her claim that she 'didn't kill him', you can't take people at face value like that. A lawyer can't act lightly with these things.

However— I also don't think that Ms. Cutter is the killer.

Seeing her supported by Trucy, hanging her head at the crime scene. I saw her shock and fear. I really don't think it was an act.

Besides, Trucy said that she believes in Ms. Cutter. And I can't just abandon one of Trucy's friends.

Athena and Apollo looked at me holding their breath.

I nodded.

“Alright. I'll take on Ms. Melody Cutter's case.”

“—Daddy! Thank you!”

Trucy's face brightened.

I'm glad that my daughter can rely on me like this, but— this looks like it'll be a tough trial.

I'm usually pretty on with such feelings.



[June 18, 7:20 PM: Detention Center]

The sun had already set by the time I was able to meet with Ms. Cutter at the detention center.

We had our meeting on opposite sides of a tempered glass window. The Ms. Cutter on the other side of the glass looked much more depressed and worn out than she had a few hours ago. Her expression was cold and stiff.

“Ms. Cutter. I’d like to represent your defence.”

As I spoke, she tilted her head quizzically.

“Represent me...?”

“That’s right. You’ll need an attorney in court. I’d like to represent you.”

“Why...?”

“Because Trucy asked me to.”

Ms. Cutter's eyes widened.

"Trucy did...?"

"Yes. Trucy believes in you. No matter what happens, you don't seem the type to commit murder."

"... Trucy..."

Ms. Cutter regained some colour to her cheeks as large tears formed in her eyes.

"... Thank you! Nobody believed in me... I was so alone."

"So will you let me act as your defence then?"

"Yes! Of course."

Ms. Cutter bowed her head deeply.

What a relief. I'll be able to keep my promise to Trucy.

However...

"Ms. Cutter. Please tell me all you know about the incident."



As soon as I said that, she returned to her cold stiff expression.

“I already told the police everything. Please ask them if you need to know.”

“Everything? Are you sure?”

Ms. Cutter still seemed to be hiding something. Going to Mr. Ukulfaskul's waiting room before the incident, her strange actions upon discovering the body... I want her to tell me everything. I wanted her to tell me about all that directly.

However she bit her lip as she bluntly replied.

“Of course. I told them everything I saw as the one who discovered the body.”

“Ms. Cutter. That's not everything, I can tell you're still hiding something...”

“I'm not hiding anything. I've already told them everything I know!”

Ms. Cutter shook her head and stood up. She and the guard left the room.

... No good, huh?

There's something she's refusing to talk about. A secret she wants to protect even if it means being a murder suspect.

But unless I know what it is— I won't be able to prove her innocent.

I saw Tracy's face flash in my mind, and let out a sigh.

Chapter 4. Testimony begins

The murder is front page news on every newspaper.

After all, the suspect is none other than the explosively popular idol, Melody Cutter.

The victim Mr. Ukulfaskul isn't nearly as well known, but he has a certain subset of fans who consider him a handsome artist.

On top of that, the incident took place backstage at a busy shopping mall... it's the ultimate sensationalist headline.

“Good luck, Daddy! I believe in you!”

Trucy may be cheering for me, but to be honest, I have no idea how today's trial is going to turn out.

After all, the prosecution has Mr. Knight and Mr. Lewis as witnesses, while the defence has nothing of any worth up its sleeve. Not even the defendant seems to trust in me.

... No, I can't give in this early. I'm used to having the odds against me. As long as I pursue the truth, I'm sure I'll have a breakthrough!

[June 20, 10:00 AM: District Court – Courtroom No. 4]

The courtroom doors opened at the appointed time.

I had Apollo as my assistant, taking on the role of co-counsel. Athena and Trucy were in the gallery.

The courtroom is laid out with the judge sitting at the top in the center, between the defence and prosecution. As the defence, I represent the defendant– That's the person accused of the crime. On the other side, the prosecution aims to prove the defendant guilty.

In a trial, the defence and prosecution must pit their claims against each other in order to bring the truth to light. The one who hands down the final verdict is the judge.

The prosecutor I'm facing today is–

As I expected.

Prosecutor Blackquill...

The judge raises his gavel, then slams it down. The familiar sound breaks the silence of the courtroom.

“Court is now in session for the trial of Melody Cutter.”

The judge solemnly declared before looking at me.

“The defence is ready, Your Honor.”

I said as per the usual process.

The judge looked to the prosecution and spoke timidly.

“Ah, Prosecutor Blackquill... I suppose we'll be... skipping the opening statement?”

... Oh brother. Seems the judge is getting used to Prosecutor Blackquill's ways.

Prosecutor Blackquill flashed his usual creepy smile at the judge...

My opponent today, Prosecutor Blackquill, has had somewhat of a unique career.

That is to say, until quite recently he was convicted on death row.

He was charged with murder. On top of that, he still appeared in court several times in the role of 'prosecutor' while still serving his sentence.

A convict acting as a prosecutor. The first, and probably the last, to do so.

Using everything in their arsenal to declare a defendant guilty is normal protocol for a prosecutor, but—

This man is known as the 'Twisted Samurai', a symbol of 'The Dark Age of the Law'.

It was just a few months ago that his guilt was cleared.

The truth of the crime he was accused of was



brought to light, and he was declared completely innocent. He's no longer a convict, a completely free man and prosecutor... However.

His dangerous glare still reflects his days as a prisoner.

The only real difference is the absence of the handcuffs that shackled him.

“Hold on. I didn't say we were skipping it.”

The judge's eyes widened as Prosecutor Blackquill spoke.

“What...? You're giving an opening statement? Like a normal prosecutor?”

“Normal... huh. I don't mind following standard procedure once in a while.”

“I see! Thank you, Prosecutor Blackquill. If you would, please.”

The judge had a large smile on his face. Apollo's shoulders slumped.

“The judge seems to be really pleased... by something as ordinary as having an opening statement.”

“He's a tricky one...”

This was going against Prosecutor Blackquill's usual modus operandi.

He always discarded the usual opening statement (a summary of the incident) considering it 'pointless' and selfishly had the judge do it for him. The kindly judge would go along with Prosecutor Blackquill and let his audaciousness slide.

That same Prosecutor Blackquill, at least for today, seemed willing to perform a standard trial. Whether it's a mere whim, the joy of being a free man or simply taking his job as a prosecutor seriously, I couldn't say...

I won't question it though. If I say anything out of line... that thing on Prosecutor Blackquill's shoulder will attack me.

“The incident occurred on June 18th. There were three people performing on the outdoor stage at the shopping mall 'Pegasus Town'. There was magical girl, fruit cutting girl and finally comedian guy. Fruit cutter used a knife prepared for her performance and stabbed the comedian... That's everything.”

... I'd hardly call that vague thing an opening statement!

But the judge nodded as he spoke.

“That has given us an outline of events. Now, if we could call the defendant to the stand.”

... Eh? You're actually okay with that opening statement... Are you feeling okay, Your Honor...?

The courtroom doors opened, and Ms. Cutter was escorted in by a bailiff. She looked far

worse and paler than she had just yesterday.

“Defendant, your name and occupation.”

Ms. Cutter answered the judge's request with a trembling voice.

“... Melody Cutter... My occupation... I'm a singer.”

“The popular fruit cutting idol. I've heard of you.”

The judge gave a serious nod.

“I've been practising how to make rabbits from apples for my grandchild. They haven't turned out well though.”

“Apple rabbits are actually quite simple... It's much easier if you use the base of the blade...”

“Ooh.” The judge admired the advice given by Ms. Cutter.

“That's good advice. The base of the blade, I see...”

The casual dialogue between defendant and judge was interrupted by Prosecutor Blackquill.

“However, our defendant wasn't able to do her famed fruit cutting on the day of the incident. In fact, I hear she was barely even able to sing properly.”

“... My knife was stolen. Not just my knife, but my stage jacket too. I was thrown off by that...”

“You left your knife at the crime scene. Stabbed right within the victim's heart.”

In the face of Prosecutor Blackquill's sharp stare, Ms. Cutter swallowed her breath.

“The only fingerprints left on the knife were the defendant's... There's no-one else other than the fruit cutting girl who could've done it.”

“Objection!”

I immediately shouted. This claim was mere supposition.

“The defendant had her knife stolen. The real murderer was obviously cautious not to leave their own prints. Fingerprints alone aren't decisive evidence!”

“Silence!”

Prosecutor Blackquill roared sharply.

Ugh... Even if he's not a convict, he's still just as intimidating.

“The defendant said herself. Not only the knife, but a jacket was also stolen.”

“Th... That's right, so...?”

“Only the knife was at the crime scene. There was no sign of the garment.”

Prosecutor Blackquill had a large grin.

“If this real murderer of yours exists, why did they steal her jacket? If they didn't leave it at the crime scene, there was no real point in doing so.”

“...”

... Good point. Not even I can explain the theft of the jacket.

If they intended to frame Ms. Cutter, there was no point taking it unless they left it somewhere in plain sight. Oddly enough, the jacket is missing even now...

“The defendant was wearing the jacket when she stabbed the victim. As a result, it was covered in blood splatter. She disposed of the garment after it was stained red... I believe this reasoning holds up?”

“I never did that...!”

Ms. Cutter shouted, but her words were all but meaningless. The defendant's word alone isn't going to hold any sway.

Finding contradictions on the defendant's behalf, that is the job of an attorney— Such as myself.

“How did she dispose of the garment? Ms. Cutter never left the staff area. There was no way for her to dispose of the bloodstained jacket!”

“Oh, but there was.”

Looking at Prosecutor Blackquill's expression, it was clear I'd fallen into his trap.

He already had something to refute my argument.

“As soon as maintenance on the elevator ended, a cleaning lady got on the elevator on the first floor. A pair of company employees who got on at the second floor testified to that effect.”

That cleaning lady, huh... The contractor who told me the wrong floor. Which means the employees who testified were probably the ones after the lost pass case.

“I know. I was in the elevator too.”

“In that case, you must have noticed. What was the cleaner holding?”

“... A bucket. A large bucket.”

“The defendant gave the garment to a cleaner who happened to be passing in the hallway. Of course, it was in a garbage bag to hide the splattered blood. I'd like to dispose of this garbage... she told the cleaner, and the jacket was tossed into the bucket without ever being

questioned, it was disposed of without ever being looked into. By now, it's probably been burned without a trace in an incinerator.”

“No... No way...!”

I desperately tried to recall the details of that cleaning lady.

She was carrying a large green bucket in her hands. I recall thinking it looked heavy. The top of the bucket was covered in a cloth, so I couldn't tell what was inside...

... N-no. I can't pull back here.

If Ms. Cutter were the culprit, would she really give her bloodstained jacket to some cleaner she'd never met? Even if it were in a bag, had the cleaner bothered to check inside she would've found the bloodstained jacket. I doubt the culprit would take a risk like that.

The judge nodded, seeming to accept Prosecutor Blackquill's argument. I shouted out.

“Objection! Has the cleaner clearly testified to receiving anything from Ms. Cutter?”

“... Heh. We are currently searching for the cleaner.”

“Then the prosecution's claim is nothing but supposition!”

“Don't get ahead of yourself. Wright-dono. I have a decisive witness against the defendant.”

... Oh yeah. The prosecution has prepared an even better witness than the cleaner...

The judge nodded with relief.

“A witness? Let's hear their testimony then.”

Ms. Cutter left the witness stand and went to the defendant's seat, and in her place the first witness took the stand.

“The name is Fabio Lewis. My occupation is being a fabulously charismatic fashion adviser!”

... The clothing store employee, huh.

Mr. Lewis adjusted the scarf around his neck as he began testifying.

“I had to use the restroom, so I went through the back door of the shop into the hallway. That was when I saw Ms. Cutter leaving the waiting room. She then snuck into the waiting room next door. I was truly surprised to later hear that a murder took place in that room!”

... The same damning testimony I heard part of yesterday.

I calmed myself before beginning the cross examination.

“About what time was this?”

“... Oh, it's you.”

Mr. Lewis looked at me with a surprised expression.

“I thought you were a reporter? So you're an attorney... Oh my. I had no idea.”

“My occupation isn't what we're here to question. What time was it you saw Ms. Cutter?”

“Oh, that's simple. Our store manager is really strict, we have to tell her whenever we go to the restroom. The boss has a notebook where she notes down the exact amount of time we spend in there.”

... Sounds like a harsh mistress.

“The precise time I entered the hallway was 1:08 PM. By the time I'd finished my business and returned to the shop, it was 1:23 PM. And don't ask what I was doing during those fifteen minutes! It was my precious private time!”

... I don't even want to know.

“While I was heading down the hallway to the bathroom, I saw Ms. Cutter. It must have been around 1:08 or 1:09 PM.”

That would be three, maybe four, minutes after the opening talk finished.

Something about that bugged me.

“At that time, Ms. Cutter's manager, Mr. Porter should have been in the room with her...”

“Her manager had been sent from the room.”

Prosecutor Blackquill answered.

“... Sent from the room?”

“The defendant had asked him to buy her a drink. After the defendant had her manager leave the room, she went and committed the crime.”

“Eh... Eeeeh...!?”

Nobody informed me of that...

I looked over at Ms. Cutter in the defendant's seat. Ms. Cutter was looking down refusing to look anyone in the eye.

Dammit... Ms. Cutter is keeping too many things hidden. It seems that Prosecutor Blackquill has taken the advantage.

“Tell us the truth, Ms. Cutter. Did you purposefully send away your manager?”

“... I did ask for a drink, but... it's not like I had any ulterior motives. I was just thirsty. It's

perfectly normal...”

“Do you acknowledge going into Mr. Ukulfaskul's waiting room?”

“... Yes. But I had a reason for that. Mr. Ukulfaskul had asked to see me.”

“He did? Was there any relation between you and Mr. Ukulfaskul?”

“None. We'd never met before. But he wanted to speak to me... I went to see him, but it was all pointless. He just asked me for my contact information or if I wanted to have dinner with him and stuff.”

I see. So Mr. Ukulfaskul was just trying to make a pass on Ms. Cutter. A likely situation.

I turned back to the judge.

“The defendant entered the victim's room on his request. There's nothing suspicious about that.”

“Hold it.”

Prosecutor Blackquill immediately shouted in objection. I put myself on guard.

“Nothing suspicious about that? Are your ears only for decoration, Wright-dono?”

“... Eh?”

“It's nothing but suspicious. The time the defendant went into his waiting room was 1:08 PM. Where was the victim at that time?”

“Eh... Ah!”

I realised what he was getting at, my face went pale.

That's the time Mr. Ukulfaskul was on stage! There's a contradiction in Ms. Cutter's testimony that she was called to waiting room B by Mr. Ukulfaskul!

Ms. Cutter... why all the lies...?

The answer eludes me. If she really didn't kill him, then what is she hiding?

Ms. Cutter mumbled with her face hidden.

“He told me he wanted to talk before we had the opening talk. He asked me to come to his waiting room later... I went to waiting room B a little early. That's all.”

“Going there early, you sent your manager away and waited for the victim in an empty waiting room. For what reason? So you could ambush the victim upon his return to the waiting room.”

“Objection!”

I shouted. At this rate, Ms. Cutter will be crushed by Prosecutor Blackquill's intimidation.

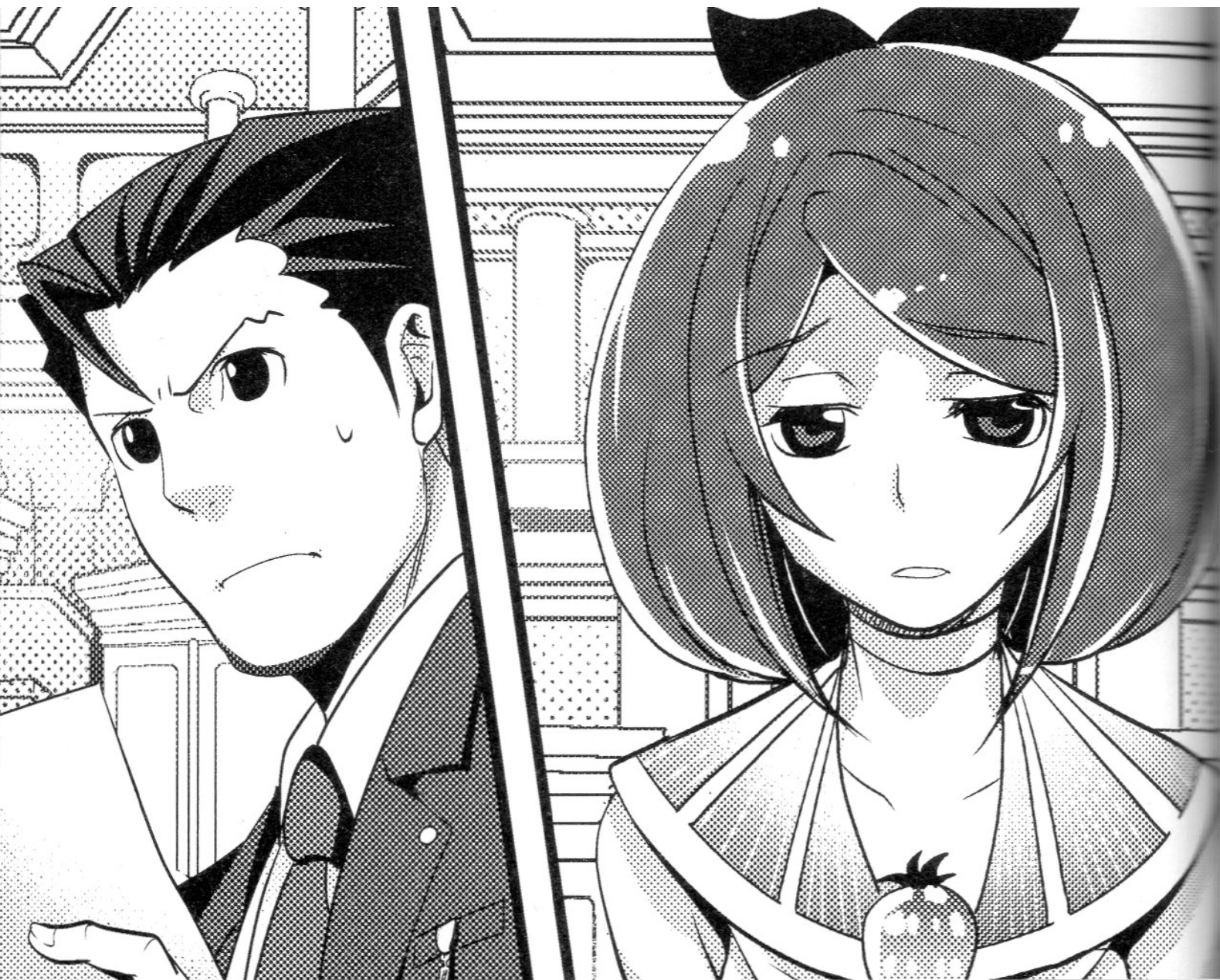
“The prosecution is badgering the defendant with his supposition! I demand he stop speaking as though his assumptions are facts!”

“Objection sustained. Prosecutor Blackquill, please refrain from phrasing your arguments this way.”

The judge spoke.

... What a relief. This judge may be a bit lax, but you can count on him for the important things.

But I can't relax now. The battle is just beginning.



I asked Mr. Lewis a new question.

“When you saw her, was Ms. Cutter holding anything?”

“Eh?”

“If she's the culprit, then she must have had the murder weapon. Was Ms. Cutter holding the knife?”

“She didn't have anything so terrifying!”

Mr. Lewis shuddered.

Yes! I've gotten an important bit of testimony!

“That is a clear contradiction. If Ms. Cutter was the culprit, then she would have to have had the knife...!”

“I never saw a knife, but come to think of it, there was something else she had.”

Mr. Lewis cut me off mid sentence.

“... Eh? Something else...?”

“An envelope. Ms. Cutter was holding an envelope.”

“An... envelope...? What kind...?”

“Just a normal envelope. Long and thin, it was probably about 20 centimetres wide.”

A regular sized envelope... Why on earth would she have had such a thing?

I looked to Ms. Cutter, but she just hid her face as usual.

It intrigues me... But, the envelope doesn't seem to hold any relevance to the case. I spoke.

“It would be impossible to fit such a large knife in an envelope that size. Therefore, it's clear that Ms. Cutter was not in possession of the murder weapon!”

“There's plenty of ways to hide a knife.”

Prosecutor Blackquill immediately refuted.

“The defendant was wearing a jacket. The knife could have been concealed inside there.”

I looked at Ms. Cutter. She finally met my gaze and shook her head slightly.

Taking strength from that gesture, I spoke up.

“The defendant was not wearing her jacket. She was only wearing a simple sleeveless one piece dress. There was nowhere to hide a large knife!”

“But she was wearing it?”

Mr. Lewis spoke with a blank expression.

My jaw dropped.

“... Huh!?”

“She was wearing her jacket. That cute jacket with all the fruit on it? When she snuck out of the waiting room, Ms. Cutter was definitely wearing it.”

... Hold. Hold on a moment there.

I looked to Ms. Cutter. She spoke looking as if she was about to start crying.

“That's a lie. I wasn't wearing it. It was warm, so I left my jacket hanging on the back of a chair... Before I'd even noticed, it was gone. I wasn't wearing it at the time I moved between rooms.”

Mr. Lewis's eyes widened as he began rambling.

“Well, I never! You're calling me a liar? What a nasty little idol you are. I've never told a single lie in my lifetime, I'm pure as the driven snow!”

... I have a feeling that that's a pretty obvious lie...

But it's hard to refute. The only ones able to testify as to whether Ms. Cutter was wearing her jacket or not... are Mr. Lewis and Ms. Cutter herself.

That's when it happened.

Apollo whispered from next to me.

“Something is off with the witness' behaviour.”

“Apollo?”

“He's blinking more now. I think he may be lying...”

Apollo put a finger on the bracelet he wore on one of his arms.



–You see, Apollo has a special talent that comes in handy in the courtroom.

He can see through the 'lies' a witness tells. It's not something I fully understand... But when a witness is lying, his bracelet reacts to it.

“My bracelet is reacting. There's something fishy in his testimony...!”

Apollo focused his concentration into his bracelet.

“–! –!”

He struck with a fierce screech.

The hawk sitting on Prosecutor Blackquill's shoulder. He attacked Apollo with his sharp beak and talons!

“Waaaah!”

Apollo screamed, crouching down covering his head.

The judge shouted flustered.

“St-stop this! Prosecutor Blackquill! Calm your bird down–!”

“–Heh. Taka, come back. You've done your job for now.”

Prosecutor Blackquill whistled through his fingers and the hawk returned to his shoulder.

The prosecutor looked like a different person as he as he gently rubbed the hawk's neck. The hawk closed his eyes happily.

– That is the ultimate weapon of the terrifying Prosecutor Blackquill. An abnormally intelligent and powerful hawk – his name is Taka.

Any time Apollo uses his ability, well, that happens. It leaves Prosecutor Blackquill's shoulder and comes to attack the defence bench.

“I forgot all about that hawk...”

Apollo shuddered incredibly.

“It's no use. We can't use your ability when we're in a trial with Prosecutor Blackquill.”

But it wasn't for naught. We know there's definitely something off about Mr. Lewis's testimony.

He's lying... Which means Ms. Cutter wasn't wearing her jacket.

But why would he lie about that? Is there something Mr. Lewis is hiding too?

Chapter 5. Beyond the Cross Examination

Continuing on, the second witness entered the courtroom. Mr. Knight from the 'Pegasus Book Center'. Naturally, he's not in his 'Bookington' costume today.

“My name... is Reed Knight. I work in a book store...”

Mr. Knight mumbled his introduction almost impossible to make out as he began his testimony.

“I was wearing a mascot costume for work. During my break, I went into the hallway and sat on the bench while wearing my costume. I saw Ms. Cutter move between waiting rooms, but I didn't make anything of it at the time. Also... I saw the attorney there walking down the hallway. That's all. I didn't see anybody else.”

Come to think of it, that reminds me.

When I was going to the owner's office. I do recall seeing Bookington sitting in the corner.

Prosecutor Blackquill spoke.

“The waiting room doors were always within his line of sight. This book store employee didn't see anyone... Nobody went near the waiting rooms other than the defendant.”

Hmm... A simple, yet troublesome testimony.

Anyway, I better start the cross examination.

“Between what times were you sitting on that bench?”

“Uuuh... The promotional character event was supposed to finish at 1:00 PM... But because of the number of customers, it overran slightly... I stepped out into the hallway at probably around 1:05 or 1:06 PM. I then sat on the bench the whole time until a bit after 1:40 PM.”

It was probably around that time when I saw Bookington on my way to the elevator. There's no contradictions. But... Something is still bugging me.

“You were wearing the costume the whole time?”

“... I just said that, didn't I?”

“I thought it'd be uncomfortable in there. Why didn't you remove it during your break?”

“I'm... kinda shy... I feel calmer when I'm inside the suit...”

Just looking at the guy, it's pretty clear he's not lying about his shyness.

However...

"I've heard that mascot suits severely restrict your field of vision. Can you really confirm that it was Ms. Cutter you saw in that state?"

"Yes... of course. The field of vision inside a mascot suit is definitely narrow. You can't look up, down, left or right. However you have a clear view directly in front. I can confirm that I saw both Ms. Cutter and yourself, Mr. Lawyer."

Going by the fact he saw me, that would mean he's not lying about seeing ahead clearly... I guess.

But something about that still bugs me.

"So you saw nobody else other than Ms. Cutter and myself? You're sure of this?"

"Ye... yeah..."

"Objection! There is a clear contradiction in the testimony."

Mr. Knight flinched as I pointed this out.

He's definitely got something weighing on his conscience. I continued with confidence.

"Ms. Cutter and I weren't the only ones to pass through that hallway. There's at least one other person who passed through who isn't mentioned in your testimony. Witness, were you really on that bench for the whole time?"

"O-o-o-o-of course! I was sitting on the bench the whole time!"

You could tell just by looking that Mr. Knight was losing his composure. Large drops of sweat formed on his brow.

I plunged straight for the truth.

"Ms. Cutter's manager, Mr. Porter left the waiting room to buy her a drink. Why didn't you ever see him?"

"Silence!"

Prosecutor Blackquill butted in.

"The manager left the room immediately after the defendant returned from the stage... at 1:05 PM. The witness previously testified that he entered the hallway at around 1:05 or 1:06 PM. Which means the witness entered the hallway just after the manager left. There's no contradiction."

Mr. Knight put a hand to his chest in relief.

I continued on.

“I'll concede on the manager. But what about the other person?”

“Other... person?”

The boutique employee Fabio Lewis used the staff toilets. According to his testimony, this was at 1:08 PM. Did you not see Mr. Lewis in the hallway?”

Mr. Knight began sweating profusely once more.

“I-it must have been before I went out into the hallway then...”

“That's odd. Just after Mr. Lewis entered the hallway he saw Ms. Cutter moving between rooms. If you really saw Ms. Cutter, there's no way you could have missed Mr. Lewis. In order to move from the boutique's back door to the bathroom, he'd have to walk right in front of you.”

While wiping away his sweat, he made a quick rebuttal.

“O-o-o-of course I saw him! I just forgot to mention it!”

“You forgot such an important detail? Well, let's revise your testimony. Please describe Mr. Lewis for us. What was he wearing? What colour were his clothes?”

Mr. Lewis has an eccentric fashion sense. You wouldn't forget him easily.

Mr. Knight became flustered. He stiffened up and looked at the ceiling.

“You never saw Mr. Lewis. Which means you also never saw Ms. Cutter. You learned of her movements later and spoke as if you had witnessed her. That's because...”

“N-n-no way... Y-you're wrong... I... I didn't!”

“That's because, you weren't in the hallway. You left the costume sitting on the bench in your place, so that you could move around freely!”

“Ah, ah, ah... **Argyaah!?**”

Bull's eye. Mr. Knight was seriously rattled. He let out a shriek, shattering his glasses with fragments flying everywhere.

Right, I've broken through. Mr. Knight's testimony has crumbled! Which means, having used his costume as an alibi, Mr. Knight himself is the most suspicious... It's time to drive it home.

Mr. Knight pulled out a spare pair of glasses and put them on, before letting out a howling scream.

“I'm not lying. I was inside Bookington the whole time, sitting on the bench! If anyone's

lying, it's gotta be that Lewis guy!”

“... What?”

“His testimony is a lie! Because, because, he couldn't have used the staff toilets. If he says he used the bathroom, then he's lying!”

... Wha...

What on earth?

Mr. Knight had made a full recovery and was full of spirit as he stood.

“The toilets were being cleaned. If you think I'm lying, then ask the mall staff. No one could have used those toilets!”

Wa-wait, what. What does this mean about Mr. Lewis's testimony then...?

I looked to Prosecutor Blackquill. Prosecutor Blackquill seemed to be as dumbfounded as I was.

So Mr. Lewis was lying in his testimony after all. Just as Apollo had pointed out. But lying about the toilet... It seems we'll have to look further into Mr. Lewis's testimony...

But I once again picked up on something odd.

The toilets were being cleaned? Something was off about Mr. Knight's testimony.

“Mr. Knight. How did you know the toilets were being cleaned?”

“Huh? It was obvious just by looking!”

“How so?”

“It's obvious. The sign. Have you never seen a restroom undergoing cleaning? They put a little sign to say cleaning in progress at the entrance!”

“– Earlier, you said this. 'The field of vision inside a mascot suit is definitely narrow. You can't look up, down, left or right.' Do you recall that?”

“.....!”

Mr. Knight began to sweat profusely again. It was even worse than before.

“Could you really see a small sign on the floor from inside the costume? I thought you couldn't see up, down, left or right?”

“Well... Well, I... um... could see... that... much... probably...”

“Let's test it out. Let's bring in the Bookington costume and a cleaning in progress sign.”

There was no need for that. Mr. Knight let out a scream of “**Argyaaah!?**” and his glasses shattered again.

He put on another spare pair and spoke despondently.

“Sorry... I'm sorry! I really did... take off the costume... That's when I saw the sign... I was also lying about being in the hallway the whole time...”

“What... what that...!?”

Prosecutor Blackquill groaned.

He gave Mr. Knight a deathly stare. I understand his anger at having learned that his trusted witness was lying but... it's terrifying.

Mr. Knight confessed through his tears.

“I'm sorry. I never thought it would come to this... My lies... they were all for Trucy... Trucy Wright!

“Trucy!?”

I was taken aback, I wasn't expecting her name to come into this.

What is this man saying...!? Is he really accusing Trucy of the crime!?

Trucy stood up in the gallery and shouted.

“I know nothing about...”

Having just been cowering behind his tears, Mr. Knight's expression immediately changed.

His eyes glittered, his cheeks flushed. Not just his expression, but his voice also...

“**Uwaaaaaaaah Trucyyyyyyyyyy! You're the super cutest in the galaxy,**



Trucyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy-!"

“...!?”

Trucy shot up, looking ready to flee.

Th... this fierce voice... I recall hearing it somewhere...

“I heard him in the audience, I think...”

Apollo whispered.

I also recalled. I heard that voice somewhere behind us during Trucy's magic show.

... Eh? Does that mean that voice I heard was Mr. Knight...?

The judge's eyes widened.

“What is the meaning of this? Witness, do you have some kind of relation to Trucyy Wright?”

“It's Trucy, not Trucyy.”

Trucy corrected him, taking offence.

Mr. Knight spoke dejectedly once more.

“I'm... just a fan... a huge fan... the biggest fan in the galaxy...”

“You falsified your testimony for Ms. Wright's sake? What do you mean by that?”

“I... wanted to see the event no matter what. Trucy's magnificently splendid adorable magic show... But I was working... Even on my break... I figured I wouldn't be allowed to...”

“So you snuck out leaving the costume in your place.”

Geez. That was one helluva false alarm...

Apollo spoke up.

“Come to think of it, when we saw him at the book store he said 'Tr, Tr, Tr'. I'm assuming he must have been shocked to see Trucy.”

Tr, Tr, Trucy! is probably what he was trying to say. He was shocked to see his favourite magician suddenly appear, went into a panic and ran away to hide inside Bookington...

Makes sense.

“... Vanish...”

A voice rumbled from the pits of hell. It was Prosecutor Blackquill. His whole essence was emanating bloodlust...!

I spoke up.

“Mr. Knight's testimony has crumbled. The 'eyes' that were supposedly keeping watch

weren't actually there. Which means we cannot dismiss the possibility of someone else other than Ms. Cutter entering or leaving the room!

“Silence!”

Prosecutor Blackquill roared. The hawk on his shoulder spread its wings threateningly.

“Even so, it doesn't change the defendant's suspicious behaviour. It still stands that she was discreetly trying to sneak into the other waiting room...!”

“—I would like to hear the testimony of Mr. Fabio Lewis once more.”

I said.

We've overturned the claim that he was going to the bathroom. This would be my opening for a breakthrough...!

Mr. Lewis stood at the witness stand once more.

He was already informed of the contents of Mr. Knight's testimony. He appeared to be rather nervous.

“Mr. Lewis. You previously told us you 'went into the hallway to use the staff restroom'. However, new testimony contradicts your claim.”

“...”

“At the time in question, the staff facilities were being cleaned. There was no way you could have used the bathroom there.”

“Indeed, that's why I headed straight back to the shop! And afterwards I went to the public bathroom for customers instead. After all, there's nothing to stop employees using the public bathrooms as well in such an instance! Got a problem with that!?”

“No... There's no problem...”

“Do you really want to know which bathroom I went to!? Are you really that interested in what I do in the bathroom—!?”

... Absolutely not!

I pointed to the court record.

“You yourself earlier stated 'The precise time I entered the hallway was 1:08 PM. By the time I'd finished my business and returned to the shop, it was 1:23 PM. ' ... See?”

“...!”

“If you immediately returned to the shop upon realising the toilets were being cleaned,

what about those fifteen minutes? What exactly were you doing during that time?”

Mr. Lewis fiddled with his scarf and kept on blinking. It seemed like he was desperately searching for a decent answer...

This was definitely an important point. I really need to shake this testimony for all it's worth.

“You previously testified against Ms. Cutter. The fact you would go as far as to lie to incriminate her... Why is that?”

“...”

“It wouldn't be because you're involved in the murder yourself, is it?”

“Of course not!”

Mr. Lewis screeched, placing his hands on his cheeks.

“Absolutely preposterous! I know nothing!”

“Then please testify. What were you doing during those fifteen minutes in the hallway?”

“That's... That's... **Hieeeeee!**”

Mr. Lewis pulled off his scarf. He was trembling fiercely...

“I, I know nothing...! Murder... As if I'd get involved in something so ghastly—!”

“Then let us check your fingerprints.”

I spoke softly, to try and calm Mr. Lewis's agitation.

“Finger... prints...?”

“We'll compare your prints to all those found within the scene. If you're truly uninvolved in the incident, you've no reason to refuse.”

“Th-th-that's... Th-th-there's no wa... y... **Guaaaaaah!?**”

Mr. Lewis's eyes rolled back and he began to foam at the mouth.

... I've really rattled him now. There's no mistaking it. He's hiding something important...

The test results were soon made clear.

The bailiff delivered the documents to me. I'm sure that these will confirm my suspicions...

“...!?”

... Eh? Wh... What the? This is...?

I'd naturally assumed that Mr. Lewis's prints would appear at the scene... That his

fabricated testimonies were to cover for his own misdeeds...

However the results from the fingerprint comparisons had betrayed my expectations.

“There's not a single fingerprint from Mr. Lewis in our crime scene, waiting room B...!”

The judge stared blankly at my statement.

“Oh...? Is that so? In that case, Mr. Lewis is clearly not involved in this incident...”

“However, waiting room A! His fingerprints were found everywhere inside that room...!”

“Eh... Eeeh? What was that...?”

The judge tilted his neck as if doubting his own ears.

I can hardly believe it myself. But scientific analysis doesn't lie.

I looked to Mr. Lewis, his eyes rolled back and his hands fluttering.

“What's the meaning of this, Mr. Lewis? Please explain. Why were your fingerprints inside waiting room A!? Not only that, but everywhere! The chairs, table, dressing table, lockers... Your fingerprints are on almost every surface within that room!”

“I... I... I'm just... Aaaah! A pure angel with a love of beautiful things! That's all I aaaam!”



Mr. Lewis crumpled upon the witness stand.

“Mr. Lewis! Explain yourself without hiding anything. What were you doing before and after the incident!?”

“I... I juuuust... love... beautiful... things... so muuuuuch...”

“If you don't have a proper explanation, you could be implicated as an accessory to murder!”

Mr. Lewis screamed “**Nooooooooo!**” and then finally began to tell the truth...

“... I just get all heated up when I see something beautiful. I want to have it for myself...”

Mr. Lewis spoke, having finally calmed himself.

“It's not the first time. A lot of times... well... when I get the chance, I take beautiful things... for myself...”

“... That is, you steal them?”

Mr. Lewis covered his face when I spoke.

“The goddess of beauty tempts me! In the face of such temptation, I’m naught but a weak lamb...!”

... So basically, you're a thief.

So until now, Mr. Lewis has continued to steal things. Which means in this instance—

“It's true I went into the hallway to use the bathroom. It just so happens that at that time I coincidentally saw Ms. Cutter. A popular idol would obviously have beautiful things in her room... like costumes or accessories! With that in mind... I just...”

So he snuck into waiting room A just after he saw Ms. Cutter leave. And he left his fingerprints while searching all over the room...

“The jacket hanging on the back of the chair was so cute! It was love at first sight! I couldn't ignore the goddess of beauty's temptation!”

“... Then you stole it?”

"I'm sorrrrrryyyyyyy—!"

Mr. Lewis smashed his forehead into the witness stand.

In order to hide his own crime, he claimed Ms. Cutter was wearing her jacket. Perjury is a serious offence.

“Where is the stolen jacket?”

“I discreetly hid it inside my own locker before taking it home...”

I nodded and turned back towards the prosecutor's bench.

Prosecutor Blackquill had turned his back. After all, his two witnesses he'd had such confidence in had both their testimonies crushed. An incredibly irritated aura emanated from him...

“It's now clear that the defendant was not wearing her jacket when she moved between rooms.”

“...”

“She was only wearing a simple sleeveless one piece dress. There was nowhere she could conceal a large knife!”

“... The defendant was wearing long boots.”

Prosecutor Blackquill turned back around.

His face was terrifying, yet calm. The hawk on his shoulder had also calmed down.

“If she had the knife in her boots, she could carry it without it being conspicuous. This stupid thief was too focused on all the things he could steal to take a close look at the defendant.”

Hmm... It's a bit of a stretch, but there's no obvious holes in that logic...

“More importantly, we have another decisive witness.”

... He's got more?

No, I've turned over some overwhelming odds already. I've just got to work past this next testimony too!

“Our next witness – is this man.”

The third witness took the stand, wiping sweat from his brow.

“Um, my name is Sebastian Porter. My occupation is as Melody Cutter's manager.”

The manager, Mr. Porter, huh?

The fact that Ms. Cutter asked Mr. Porter to leave the room to go shopping... is a fact already well known to us. Has he got even more testimony that will throw suspicion on Ms. Cutter?

“Melody told me 'I'd like you to buy me a drink', so I left the waiting room. I had trouble finding the 'banana green tea melon honey soda' she asked for, so I went around a lot of

vending machines. When I was unable to find it anywhere, I finally asked in a convenience store within the mall, only to find out it was a new product that wasn't being released for another three days yet... With no other option, I settled for buying her a regular green tea and returned to the waiting room. However, Melody wasn't there and I heard a voice coming from the room next door. I went back into the hallway and tried to enter waiting room B, but the door was locked.”

Lo... Locked...? The door to waiting room B...?

This is the ultimate testimony for the prosecution! The reason Prosecutor Blackquill had been so calm is because he still had this card up his sleeve.

But, I can't back down. I began the cross examination.

“Around what time did you return to the waiting room?”

“It was 1:37 PM. I knew I had to be back before Melody had her act, so I was frequently checking my watch, so I'm certain.”

“Whose voice was it you heard coming from waiting room B?”

“It was Melody's.”

“And what about Mr. Ukulfaskul's voice?”

“I didn't hear it... as far as I recall.”

“What was Ms. Cutter saying?”

“I heard her say 'Today is the end of it' in a worked up state. After that, she was speaking too quietly for me to make out any words.”

Today is the end of it... What could that mean? If she'd never met Mr. Ukulfaskul before, isn't that an odd thing to say?

Ms. Cutter was looking downwards. This... is pretty bad...

I continued my questioning in desperation.

“So the door to waiting room B was locked... What did you do then?”

“I knocked on the door and called out to her. I said 'Melody, you're on soon' and she replied 'I know', but she didn't open the door. I then returned to waiting room A. The room has two doors, one in the hallway and one on the wing of the stage. I figured I'd check on her in waiting room B from the stage side door.”

“Did you see inside waiting room B?”

“No. By the time I came out onto the wing of the stage, Melody had come out from waiting room B. She looked pale and unsteady on her feet so I asked 'Are you okay?'. She

replied 'I'm fine. Get me my jacket and knife'. I then went back to waiting room A... but I could find neither the jacket or the knife there. By the time I'd returned to tell her I couldn't find them, she'd already gone on stage in the chaos in her bewildered state."

I desperately searched for a thread to pull on... but...

The hallway door was locked. The other door connects to the wing of the stage, where Trucy and the staff were the whole time. Which means...

"Which means the room was inaccessible."

The conclusion I didn't want to admit to was spelled out by Prosecutor Blackquill.

"The only ones inside were the victim and the defendant. It was impossible for a third party to have entered. Are you still going to insist that your client is innocent?"

"...!"

Think. Were there any contradictions in Mr. Porter's testimony? Any odd points? Any chance that Mr. Porter was lying...?"

I decided to ask Ms. Cutter.

"The statement that the door to waiting room B was locked... Is it true?"

Ms. Cutter lifted her head and gave a small nod.

"It's true. I locked the door."

"...! Why did you do that?"

"..."

She looked down again.

If Mr. Ukulfaskul was being persistent in unwanted advances, the normal reaction would be to leave the room and go back to her own one, not locking the door.

What reason did she have to lock the door...?

"The envelope."

Prosecutor Blackquill spoke as if to answer my question.

"Envelope?"

"The one that stupid thief testified about. When the defendant entered the room she was holding an envelope."

That's right. What's the story behind the envelope...?

“We found it at the scene. It was in the victim's bag.”

“Eh...”

“There was cash inside. Quite a lot of cash.”

“Eh... Eeeeeeeeh-!?”

I was taken aback with shock.

Prosecutor Blackquill continued, not giving up his pursuit.

“The banknotes found inside the envelope had fingerprints from both the victim and the defendant. You understand the significance of this, Wright-dono?”

“...”

“The defendant gave the victim an envelope filled with cash. It seems there was some reason she had to pay him money in secret. For that reason, she chased off her manager and locked the door.”

This... This can't be...

I thought they had never met before? He wasn't being persistent in trying to obtain her contact details? Was everything you told me all a lie, Ms. Cutter...!?

Prosecutor Blackquill went to seal the deal.

“The defendant was being blackmailed by the victim. That was her motive to kill him!”

The once silent gallery became an uproar.

I was out of answers, I stared blankly at Ms. Cutter.

Ms. Cutter lifted her face and shouted through her tears.



“It's true I was giving that man money. But, I absolutely did not kill him...!”

Chapter 6. A coincidental encounter

[June 21, 10:00 AM: Detention Center]

I spoke, feeling incredibly worn out, to the person on the other side of the glass.

“Did you get any sleep last night, Ms. Cutter?”

“...”

“... Of course not. Not after how the trial went.”

The first day of the trial was a complete disaster. It wouldn't have been a surprise if we'd gotten a guilty verdict already. But somehow, we'd managed to hold out for a second day...

“You lied about having never met Mr. Ukulfaskul. He's been blackmailing you for a while.”

“... I'm sorry.”

“What's the cause of that? What was he blackmailing you with?”

There was no answer.

“Ms. Cutter. You'll be declared guilty at this rate.”

“...”

“I want to know everything, no secrets held. Believe in me. I want to help you.”

“...”

Ms. Cutter shook her head and stood up.

No good, huh... Her heart is locked behind chains. How can I get her to open up... I've no idea.

[June 21, 10:20 AM: Outside the Prosecutor's Office]

I'm cornered. No way out.

To begin with, my client doesn't even trust me. There's no way I can successfully defend a client who lies and hides things from me.

I was down in the dumps. I was looking down with my shoulders slumped, walking at a quick pace—

“Wright.”

Suddenly, I was called upon. I stopped walking and turned around.

“What's wrong? That's quite a gloomy expression.”

It was an irritating voice... Well no, not the voice itself. In fact, it's quite a smooth voice...

However.

“Edgeworth.”

I turned with a slight sigh.

Standing right in my line of sight was Miles Edgeworth. My childhood friend and current Chief Prosecutor – In other words, the top dog at the prosecutor's office.

Throughout all our years, Edgeworth has always been my exact opposite. Refined, successful and confident. Which means... when I'm in this kind of mood is exactly when I want to see him the least.

“... Why are you in a place like this?”

I muttered, to which Edgeworth smirked slightly and shrugged his shoulders.

“A place like this? Do you even know where you are right now?”

“...”

I looked up and examined my surroundings.

I saw the words 'Prosecutor's Office' written in bold letters...

Without realising where I was going, I'd somehow ended up at the prosecutor's office. It's quite obvious that Chief Prosecutor Edgeworth would be here at the prosecutor's office.

I was quite embarrassed and attempted a quiet apology before slipping away.

“Wait, Wright.”

Edgeworth spoke in his usual calm manner.

“You didn't do too well in court yesterday. I heard all about it. Apparently you were helpless going up against Blackquill.”

“...”

He's deliberately stopped me just to rub salt in the wound. I looked away.

Edgeworth spoke again.

“Struggle as much as you can. We will bring the truth to light.”

“...”

“For that is our duty.”

“... Edgeworth...”



Edgeworth turned his back and walked back to the prosecutor's office.

... Duty, huh? That's typical Edgeworth.

But what is my duty?

I don't even need to think about it. The answer is clear.

My duty is the same as Edgeworth's. To bring the truth to light. Our positions may be opposed, but Edgeworth and I both have the same goal.

Right. There's no time for me to worry about something like not having any trust from my client.

No matter what the handicap is, I can't give in. I have to do everything I can to find the truth. That's the only way I have of saving Ms. Cutter.

I felt my strength returning. I'm embarrassed to have let myself get down so easily.

– I'll struggle as much as I can.

It's an incredibly roundabout way of doing it, but I'd say that was Edgeworth's way of cheering me on.

I walked onwards, my head held high.

I can't let myself feel down. I'm going to struggle along all the way to the truth!

[June 21, 11:07 AM: Pegasus Town]

I've returned to the crime scene. Maybe there's some clue that's been overlooked.

Pegasus Town was practically deserted. There were only a few customers scattered about, making Sunday's crowds seem like a dream.

I know it's probably due to it being a weekday, but it's still slightly depressing. It wouldn't surprise me if the incident had cast a shadow over the place. The sooner this is resolved the better, then it'll return to business as usual...

As I was walking – I suddenly heard a cell phone ringtone.

It wasn't mine. A woman passing by took her phone from her small bag and answered with a “Hello.”

If that was all, I wouldn't take any further notice. But at the same moment she took out her phone, a pink pass case fell out.

The woman kept walking on without noticing. I picked up the pass case.

It had a black cat design. Could this be...

I called out to the woman “You dropped this.” as I went after her. The woman turned around and her eyes widened as I handed the pass case to her.

Just as I thought. It's the woman I was in the elevator with on the day of the incident.

“Sorry, I'll call you back!”

The woman ended her call and bowed profusely as she accepted her pass case.

“Thank you! Oh man, when did I drop it...”

“Just then. When you took your phone out.”

“No way, I did it again...”

The woman gave an embarrassed laugh before taking another look at me and saying “Ah” in recognition.

“Are you the guy I saw in the elevator the other day...? The one who wanted to meet the owner and got off at the wrong floor!”

“That's me.”

“No way, what a coincidence! I was also worried about having lost my pass case at the time too!”

A coincidence... or you just lose it way too often.

“I guess someone else picked it up last time too?”

I asked without thinking. The woman nodded with a smile.

“That's right! It turns out I did drop it in the elevator. The elevator maintenance guy found it and left it with management!”

“That's good to hear.”

“A total relief. I'm really attached to this pass case!”

It seems to become detached quite frequently though.

As I was about to leave, she asked me another question.

“Are you here to see the owner again?”

“No, today I'm here to investigate the incident...”

“Eh!? By incident, you mean that comedian who was murdered!? Does that mean you're a police detective!?”

Her eyes widened.

“No, I'm not with the police...”

“A private eye then!? Amazing! I've never met a real live P.I. Before!”

“N-no, I'm not any kind of detective, I'm a lawyer...”

“A lawyer!? That's so amazing—! I've never met a real live lawyer before—!”

Lawyers aren't that unusual, are they?

“Was Melody Cutter really the culprit!? Or is the true culprit someone else!?”

“Well... Uh... That's what I'm here to determine...”

The woman's eyes sparkled as she puffed out her chest.

“Alright, ask me anything you like about the incident! Although I don't really know anything!”

... That would be kinda pointless.

“Sorry, I haven't introduced myself yet, I'm Harriet Rush. I'm part of Pegasus Town's management team, third branch!”

... Is it really safe to leave management to a person like this?

“At the time of the incident I was busy working. In a room with twenty other people. My alibi is airtight!”

“No, I don't doubt your claim one bit...”

“Of course, I'd have rather been ditching work and watching that live event.”

Ms. Rush said somewhat disappointed, totally ignoring what I had to say.

“Melody and Trucy are both so cute! I love them both.”

... Oh. She's complimenting Trucy. She's somewhat careless, but I like her already.

“But that comedian, Mr. Ukulfaskul... That was a mistake. The folks in the event planning department sure screwed up there. Why anyone would book such a boring performer is beyond... me... Ah.”

Ms. Rush shut her mouth.

“I shouldn't be saying that. Dead men tell no tales and all!”



... I think what she meant was 'never speak ill of the dead'...

“The owner was the one who chose the acts. The owner is a nice guy and all, he's good to his employees and is highly capable, but his sense of humour is hopeless... He's hopeless with good jokes!”

Come to think of it, Mr. Owens did say he 'burst out laughing' the first time he saw Mr. Ukulfaskul perform... It seems his sense of humour really is somewhat askew.

“He's a bit of an oddball. I mean... He's rich, kind, not too bad on the eyes, I'm surprised he's remained single all this time... Ah!”

Ms. Rush shut her mouth again.

“I shouldn't have let that slip. Please don't tell the owner I said any of that!”

“I won't breathe a word of it.”

... Hm? Hold it. Something about that... bothers me...

Ms. Rush spoke with a sudden realisation.

“Oh no, I'm supposed to be working. I need to get back already! Was my testimony of any use? If there's anything else you want to know, just call for me!”

“Thank you.”

I thanked her and began waking. Ms. Rush ran off. Hopefully she doesn't drop anything else...

Ten footsteps later, it hit me. The reason why Ms. Rush's statement bothered me.

(Remained single all this time...)

Single? All this time?

I'm certain that Mr. Owens told he he 'lost his family a year ago'. I'd just jumped to the conclusion that he'd had a wife, but perhaps he didn't.

It could've been his parents or siblings who passed away... Either way, I feel bad for the guy.

While I had my mind on such things, I went towards the staff area. My card key for the door had already been returned. But if I explain that I'm the attorney handling the case, they can't just turn me away.

“Mr. Wright?”

As I passed near the outdoor stage, a voice called to me.

It was Mr. Owens. He was wearing his usual sharp suit.

“I knew I'd find you here. Knowing you, I just figured you'd be back to examine the scene of the crime again.”

Mr. Owens spoke with a smile before changing his expression.

“I saw the trial yesterday.”

“... You did?”

“You were truly magnificent. The way you fought tooth and claw for the defendant was truly inspiring... but...”

Mr. Owens's expression clouded.

“Even so, it doesn't seem like your efforts are going to pay off this time.”

“...”

“I'm sorry. But after seeing yesterday's trial, I can't come to any other conclusion than Ms. Cutter being guilty. It's hard to believe... that such a cute idol could kill a man.”

“I believe in Ms. Cutter. No matter what odds are against me, I'll bring the truth to light.”

I stated clearly. Mr. Owens looked at me in surprise.

“The... truth?”

“Yes. Because that's my job.”

“... Magnificent.”

Mr. Owens mumbled, looking away.

“I often think about it. All the injustice in the world... When the truth is buried in darkness and evil people slip through the law's net, living carefree lives... It's quite unforgivable... I feel.”

I didn't expect that. For the kindly Mr. Owens to speak with such anger in his voice.

“No matter how much they ignore it, the wicked never truly escape their deeds. Evil will always receive its punishment... Always...”

“Mr. Owens...?”

Noticing my taken aback state, Mr. Owens came to his senses. His spiky attitude vanished, returning to his usual gentlemanly demeanor.

“Ah, I apologise. I got a little fired up there... Anyway, the sooner this is resolved the better. The longer it drags on, the more customers we'll lose!”

Mr. Owens said with a smile.

After going our separate ways, I returned to the crime scene.

Detectives and investigators came and went from waiting room B as the investigation continued. I was let in as the attorney handling the case.

The body had obviously been removed and the blood on the floor wiped up. However the positions of the chairs and tables and the open doors of the lockers were just as they were when the corpse was discovered.

I took a look inside the locker. Of course, there were no clues left inside. Even when the body was discovered, this locker had been empty. It's just that the victim's blood splatter had gotten in there too.

... Hold it. If the inside of the locker was empty...

Then he wasn't using it? No, but then there would be no reason for the door to be open. Something must have been taken out of it. But what...?

I called out to the detective examining the dressing table.

“Did you get any fingerprints off the locker door?”

The young detective looked at me indifferently as he answered.

“Yeah, Melody Cutter's fingerprints. There were perfectly clear on the locker's handle.”

Ms. Cutter's fingerprints... Does that mean she used the locker? But this is Mr. Ukulfaskul's room, so why...?

“That locker is broken, by the way.”

The detective told me as I was lost in thought.

“It won't lock. Owner Owens says it was working the day before the incident. We're assuming the culprit damaged it. We're unsure as to the reason though.”

Someone broke the locker... I'm assuming they wanted something from inside it? Did Ms. Cutter break it?

Ms. Cutter's fingerprints... The open door... The blood splatter inside. It all has to mean something.

Either way, the presence of Ms. Cutter's fingerprints... is totally detrimental to my case.

Chapter 7. New evidence

[June 22, 10:00 AM: District Court – Courtroom No. 4]

With nothing new to help my case, the second day in court began.

Ms. Cutter was in the defendant's chair, hiding her face as usual as if the whole world was her enemy.

As always, the judge banged his gavel to show that court was in session.

“The defence is ready, Your Honor.”

“... Are you okay, Mr. Wright? You're sounding a bit weak there!”

My assistant for today, Athena, whispered to me.

As a newbie lawyer, Athena doesn't have as much legal experience as Apollo, but right now her infectious optimism is exactly what I need.

“Ah... I'm fine.”

I lifted my head and looked at the prosecution.

“... Heh.” Prosecutor Blackquill gave a cynical chuckle, then looked to the judge.

“The prosecution has obtained some new evidence.”

“New evidence, you say? Oho... What is it? Please present it to us.”

At the judge's insistence, Prosecutor Blackquill held up something small.

I couldn't quite tell what was between his fingers. Something small, thin and black...?

“What is it?”

Prosecutor Blackquill answered the judge's question.

“A memory card. It was found in the pocket of the victim's parka.”

“.....!”

Ms. Cutter suddenly stood up from the defendant's chair.

She put her hands to her mouth, as if trying to contain a scream.

A memory card...? Could it be... that it contains what Ms. Cutter feared... the hold the victim had over her...?

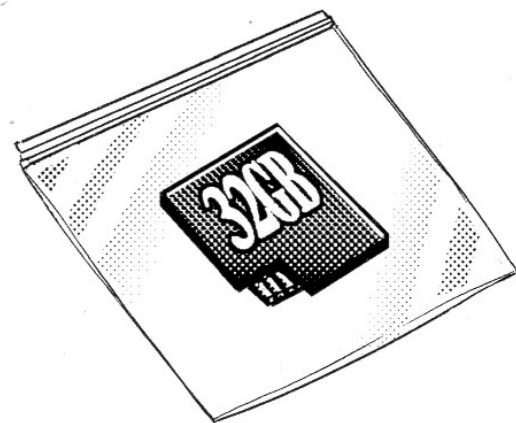
“... A video is recorded on it.”

Prosecutor Blackquill spoke indifferently.

“It's an old video. From ten years ago. However – it will allow us to grasp the truth behind this case.”

“–Please stop!”

The one who shouted was Ms. Cutter. Her face was scrunched up.



“That's... That's...”

A bailiff started to set up equipment in the middle of the courtroom. A monitor to view the video on.

His progress was interrupted by, oddly enough, Prosecutor Blackquill.

“... The defendant is quite familiar with the content of this video.”

He looked at Ms. Cutter, who was petrified and trembling, as he spoke.

“If the defendant is willing to explain, we can forgo watching the actual footage. You can talk, or we'll show the video... It's your choice.”

... What's the meaning of this? What is Prosecutor Blackquill plotting this time...?

Ms. Cutter answered with tears in her eyes.

“... I'll talk. I'll tell you everything.”

Ms. Cutter wiped her tears and took a deep breath to compose herself, then she began talking.

About the secretly recorded footage from over ten years ago.

“... The video contains footage of my father.”

The moment Ms. Cutter started her confession, the judge cut in.

“Your father is Upton Cutter, isn't it? The former world champion boxer.”

“... Yes.”

“I remember them well, your father's exploits! He was a powerful champion. Especially with his legendary tenth title match as defending champion! It was back in the day, that passionate challenger would knock him down, only for him to keep rising to his feet with incredible fighting spirit... Then suddenly, he settled the match with his ultimate uppercut...! Even now, it was the greatest boxing match!”

The judge is really getting into it. I guess he must be a boxing fan. I never knew that.

I'm no expert on the subject, but I'm at least familiar with the name Upton Cutter. As the judge said, he's a former champion who is famous for that legendary match. If you were to poll boxing fans on the 'Greatest Match of All Time', then that match would undoubtedly come out on top.

The fact that Melody Cutter is the daughter of that legendary boxer has gained attention ever since her debut.

“... I was so proud of my father. I was aware he wasn't always the best role model as a

parent, but it didn't bother me. In fact, I was pleased. I was proud to have such a splendid father... That's how things were.”

... Past tense? So things are different now?

Ms. Cutter's dark expression didn't give the impression of proudly talking about her dad...

“That video was recorded a few days before his tenth defending title match. It was secretly recorded without my father's knowledge. It shows my father... talking with his opponent, Max Fitch.”

“... What's that you say?”

Ms. Cutter closed her eyes and spoke in a single breath.

“My father bribed Mr. Fitch to throw the match.”

“Wha...!?”

The judge exclaimed in surprise.

“What's that!? You mean to say he fixed the match!?”

“That's right. The match now known as the greatest of all time, was fixed in my father's favour from the beginning.”

In a moment the gallery fell silent, then it started buzzing like a beehive. Not even the judge pounding his gavel would restore order.

“Order, order in the court! Defendant, you're really saying your father's match was fixed!?”

“That's right. It's all there in the recording. Mr. Fitch was wary when meeting my father, so he prepared a hidden camera in advance. My father's unashamed attempt at bribery was all recorded on camera. Mr. Fitch refused at first, but it was an incredible amount of cash. He was having money issues at the time due to his extravagant lifestyle. Rather than risking things on a real match he couldn't predict, he could take the money and throw the match, retiring comfortably.”

Ms. Cutter spoke smoothly, finally getting the weight of this secret off her chest.

“The two of them planned the flow of the match in advance. First Mr. Fitch would take the advantage, knocking my father down countless times... But before the final count was up, he'd win with a miraculous uppercut.

“I... I can't believe it... That match... was rigged...”

The judge was in shock. He was in a daze, seemingly having forgotten his role entirely.

I was also shocked. Not about the boxing match though. Rather, about the fact that

Prosecutor Blackquill had this as his first move.

The prosecution was one or two... possibly even ten steps ahead of me. We're closing in on the truth of this incident.

What am I even doing...!?

Ms. Cutter continued on.

“Mr. Ukulfaskul was Mr. Fitch's nephew.”

“...!?”

The gallery was once again consumed by chaos. Athena and I were both lost for words. Having already dug up all the facts, Prosecutor Blackquill listened indifferently.

“Mr. Fitch passed away from an illness half a year ago. Mr. Ukulfaskul found the memory card among his possessions. He then approached me and told me... I had to pay him off or else it would go public. That if I gave him the money, he'd give me the memory card... And of course, that he made no copies. It was all shrouded in darkness. I did as he said and paid him off several times.”

I heard the gallery whispering amongst themselves things like “Match fixer”, “Liar” and “She's the worst”. It seems that the match fixing scandal will be even bigger than the murder in tomorrow's papers and TV coverage.

Cold stares were upon Ms. Cutter. However she would no longer hide her face. The truth had set her free to show heartfelt confidence.

Allowing Ms. Cutter to testify in place of showing the footage, maybe Prosecutor Blackquill is going a little soft... It's possible. I mean, it'd be pretty tough for her to have to show off her father at his worst in front of other people.

... No, my perspective on this is too naïve. Prosecutor Blackquill is just as harsh as always.

“The defendant begged the victim to let this payment be the last, but was refused. The continual demand for more money drove the defendant to despair, that's when she decided... to turn to murder. That is the truth of this incident.”

“You're wrong! I only gave him the money. I didn't do anything else!”

Ms. Cutter objected.

– Then something happened. Athena whispered from beside me.

“It's odd. There's still some noise left.”

“Eh?”

“There's a lot less than before, but there's still a little left. It seems like she's still hiding something.”

“Noise, huh...?”

– This is Athena's special ability.

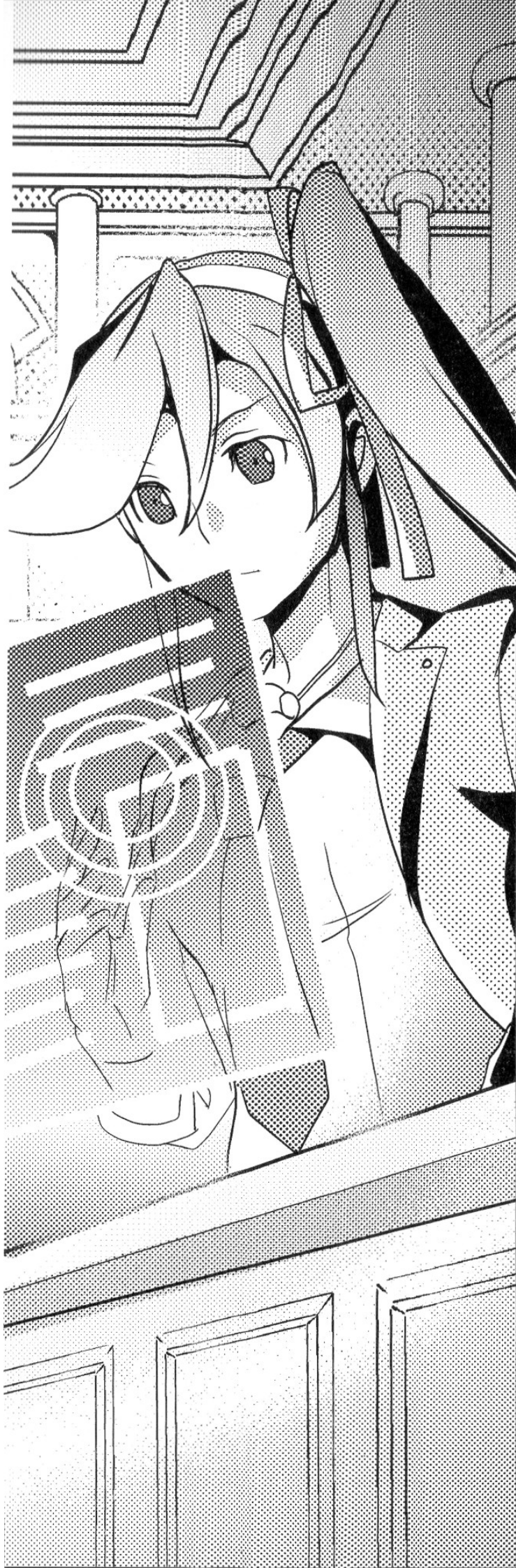
Human emotions are complicated. No matter how much you try to hide them, some trace comes though in the tone of your voice. Athena's sharp ears can pick up the slightest hint of emotions in a voice. When a person's emotions are unstable or confused, it becomes perceived as 'noise' within their voice.

Despite coming clean on everything, there's still some noise remaining in Ms. Cutter's voice... Which means... There's something she's still hiding.

The thing she's hiding. It must be—

“Ms. Cutter. You broke the locker in waiting room B, didn't you?”

“... Eh!?”



Ms. Cutter's eyes widened.

There was nothing unnatural about her expression... but...

“The locker was in perfect working order a few days ago, but now it's broken. On top of that, your prints were found on the locker's handle. Did you break the locker and take its contents?”

“... Defence?”

The judge spoke with surprise.

“Um... I believe you're supposed to defend the defendant? Incriminating the defendant is the prosecution's job.”

“Yes, that's right. Which is why I would like this clarified.”

I nodded.

This was to eliminate Ms. Cutter's noise. Unless everything is cleared up, we'll never find the truth.

Ms. Cutter shook her head.

“I didn't do it! I know nothing about the locker!”

“Then why are your fingerprints on the handle?”

“That's... uh... I tripped. I tripped over near the locker and grabbed its handle by instinct. That's all.”

Ms. Cutter spoke nervously and averted her face.

Athena promptly whispered.

“There's an unnatural emotion. She's feeling intense fear.”

“Fear...?”

“Such incredible fear and surprise... Those emotions are showing in her voice. It's really strange for her to have such a reaction to just recalling touching a locker!”

– I'll have to put my faith in Athena's abilities!

I asked a question.

“Did something happen when you touched the locker, Ms. Cutter?”

“... Eh...?”

“You were incredibly shocked and afraid. Why is that? Please explain it to us.”

“I... I wasn't... afr... afraid...”

Ms. Cutter's voice trembled, before going silent – She seems to have accepted she can't hide it anymore. She spoke with her face hidden.

“... I'm sorry. The truth is... before Mr. Ukulfaskul returned to his room, I went through his things.”

“His things?”

“The bag on his table, the parka he left on the chair, stuff like that. I thought I might be able to find the memory card... but I didn't see it, so I thought I'd check the locker.”

I see. She felt guilty and didn't want to admit searching another person's belonging.

“But the moment I was about to open the locker, Mr. Ukulfaskul came back. I was so shocked my heart almost stopped...”

“Hold it right there. So that means you never opened the locker then?”

“I didn't open it. I just touched the handle.”

... But it was open when the corpse was discovered. And the victim's blood had splattered inside.

There's a contradiction. Perhaps there's some clue in that.

“Please testify in detail. About the moment Mr. Ukulfaskul returned.”

“... Sure. He saw me with my hand on the locker door and laughed at me. 'Take a look if you like. It's not in there.' he said, before taking it from his shirt pocket and flaunting it at me. He told me 'If you want it, then pay up.', so I reluctantly gave him the money. But he just put it back in his breast pocket and began humming. I begged him 'Give it. Let today be the end of it.' but... That's when Mr. Porter knocked on the door and spoke to me. I didn't have time to argue, so I gave in and went to the wing of the stage.”

... So at that point, the locker was still closed...

That's when I noticed something odd. There was a clear contradiction in the testimony.

“Ms. Cutter, you said Mr. Ukulfaskul put the memory card in his shirt pocket?”

“Yeah...”

“Earlier, 'the memory card was found in the pocket of the victim's parka.' is what Prosecutor Blackquill told us. That's a clear contradiction!”

Prosecutor Blackquill gave a weary reply to my objection.

“There's no contradiction. Shirt, parka... they're practically the same thing. The defendant was mistaken.”

“I'm not mistaken! He put the memory card into his shirt pocket. The breast pocket of the green shirt he was wearing.”

... The shirt's breast pocket.

The pieces of the puzzle are coming together in my mind.

“When Ms. Cutter discovered the body, she reached for the left side of his chest... Trucy Wright testified to that effect.”

Prosecutor Blackquill looked over the written records.

“... Ah. She did say that during police questioning.”

“Ms. Cutter. Do you recall your actions at the time?”

“... Yes. At the time, I... couldn't think of anything other than the memory card. I was going to search his breast pocket. But I came to my senses when Trucy stopped me.”

I looked to Prosecutor Blackquill.

“Mr. Ukulfaskul put the memory card in his shirt pocket. However, it was instead discovered in the pocket of his parka. This is a clear contradiction!”

“Concerning yourself with such minor issues is the height of foolishness... Hmph...!”

Prosecutor Blackquill slammed the prosecution bench as he spoke in a forceful voice.

N... No, this is a trial. We have to go over every small detail...

“There's no contradiction. The victim put the memory card in his shirt pocket, but later changed his mind and put it in his parka pocket instead... That's all.”

“Why would he do that? There's no reason.”

I shook my head.

“There's only one explanation for the memory card moving. A third party was in the room.”

“... What's that?”

“That third party was planning to frame Ms. Cutter. In order to do that, they had to be sure the memory card ended up in police custody. The video it contains would be a strong motive for murder... It would put Ms. Cutter at a clear disadvantage!”

Prosecutor Blackquill shut up. I continued with vigour.

“Ms. Cutter knew the memory card was in his shirt pocket. During the confusion following the discovery of the corpse, she could possibly steal the memory card. In order to prevent that, the culprit moved it somewhere else. The pocket of his parka on the chair!”

“You're forgetting something important, Wright-dono.”

Prosecutor Blackquill spoke, having not yet lost his calm.

“The door to waiting room B was locked. Unless we're dealing with a ghost, this third party couldn't have entered the room!”

– The culprit is no ghost. They're a flesh and blood person. And flesh and blood people can't just pass through locked doors.

Which means – there's only one possibility. I saw only one answer to the issue of the locked room.

“There's only one possible explanation. The culprit entered the room before it was locked!”

“What... did you say!?”

Prosecutor Blackquill was taken aback.

“Have you lost your marbles, Wright-dono? Are you saying there was a third party in the room when the defendant and victim were talking!?”

“That's right. And that person is the true culprit!”

“How could they hide in the room without being noticed... Well? Was the culprit the invisible man!?”

I shook my head.

“The culprit was neither invisible nor a ghost. The culprit is naturally a human.”

“In that case—”

“The culprit was hiding. There was only one place to do that. The culprit was inside the locker the whole time!”

“Wha...!?”

Prosecutor Blackquill was lost for words.

Despite not being in use, the locker was open. I've finally solved that mystery.

I spoke with confidence.

“They're large lockers in that room. Large enough to fit a person. The culprit was hiding inside the locker the whole time, waiting for a chance to kill him!”

“Preposterous...!”

Prosecutor Blackquill slammed the bench fiercely.

“When was this exactly? At which point did this true culprit go in there?”

“That's...”

Think hard, Phoenix Wright. You have the clues!

Before the event started, when everyone involved was in waiting room A, Mr. Porter showed us the knife. Since the culprit stole the knife to use as the murder weapon, they obviously hid in the locker later than that.

Waiting room A didn't become empty until the opening talk started at around 1:00 PM.

And then Ms. Cutter entered waiting room B at 1:08 PM. Which means the culprit only had an eight minute window to steal the knife from waiting room A and hide in the locker in waiting room B.

Additionally, Mr. Knight from the book store entered the hallway around 1:05 PM, took off his mascot costume and passed right by the waiting rooms. There was only an incredibly short window where the culprit could act without being seen.

“Is something the matter, Mr. Wright?”

I came to my senses when I heard the judge call my name.

I've no time to lose myself. If I put the pieces together the right way, I'll soon see the truth!

“The culprit acted according to a tight schedule. It would be impossible unless they knew the event's time schedule as well as the layouts of both the waiting rooms and hallway.”

“Indeed, that's true.”

“The event staff were all busy working either



backstage or in the audience seating, which means they were not anywhere near the scene of the crime. Out of all the people who knew these details – there can only be one suspect.”

“Oho? And who would that be?”

A certain person's face came to mind.

–I don't want to doubt him. He's someone who acknowledges Tracy's talent after all.

But...

Within the strict limits of the case, he's the only one who could move freely like the invisible man. There's no other possible suspects than him.

“I'd like to summon some new witnesses.”

“Who would you like to call?”

I took a deep breath and named two people.

Chapter 8. Turnabout your logic

At my request, my first witness – Mr. Owens, took the witness stand.

He introduced himself with his usual gentlemanly smile.

“Beau Owens. I am the owner of Pegasus Town.”

He looked to me and gave a light nod.

“I'm willing to discuss everything I know in regards to the incident. However, I was busy working in my office, so I may not have much to say that is of any use.”

“Mr. Owens. Please describe your activities that day in detail.”

I said, and he silently nodded in reply.

“Before the event, I spoke with all the performers in waiting room A. Afterwards, Mr. Wright, Mr. Ukulfaskul and myself left the room. Mr. Ukulfaskul immediately went to waiting room B, but I had a conversation with Mr. Wright as I was walking. I had to get back to my office before the elevator maintenance started... I believe that's what we were discussing. That was at 12:55 PM.”

“... Yeah.”

“I returned to my office on the top floor to take care of some work. Mr. Wright later came up there to enquire about an event taking place next month. That was just before 2:00 PM. Just before Mr. Wright was about to leave, I got the call notifying me of the incident.”

“Prioritising work over the event. Quite admirable.”

The judge picked an odd moment to show his admiration. Prosecutor Blackquill then spoke.

“So basically, our witness got in the elevator at 12:55 PM and went to the top floor, and was there until being notified of the incident. He has no bearing to the case.”

“That is, if he really did board the elevator.”

Mr. Owens laughed at my suggestion. Remaining dignified to the end.

“What do you mean, Mr. Wright? Are you saying I didn't use the elevator?”

“I turned my back and walked away when we finished talking. I never saw you actually enter the elevator.”

“... Your point being?”

“You never went into the elevator. You hid yourself and waited until the waiting room

was deserted, didn't you?"

"–Surely, you're not treating me as a murder suspect?"

Mr. Owens's smile became bitter.

"That's quite an accusation. Where might I have been hiding? There's no hidden spots in the hallway."

"In the bathroom, of course."

I indicated on my rough sketch of the crime scene. The judge spoke.

"Oho? Are these those toilets that were undergoing cleaning?"

"That's right. The toilets are right near the waiting rooms. If you hid here, it'd be easy to move quickly..."

"Enough nonsense, Wright-dono. Save guesswork for the racecourse... A gambling loving prisoner told me that."

Prosecutor Blackquill said threateningly. Ugh... Why should I listen to a prisoner...

"There's a way to confirm my guesswork. We can enquire with Pegasus Town whether there was any cleaning scheduled for that time. If there was nothing scheduled – then there's no reason someone couldn't just go in there and put up the 'cleaning in progress' sign... It's quite simple."

The look in Mr. Owens's eyes became grim – or at least it looks that way.

The judge nodded and called a bailiff to enquire about this matter with Pegasus Town.

The result was soon clear. The bailiff reported his findings to the judge.

"I confirmed with Pegasus Town's management office, there was no scheduled cleaning at that time – that is all."

... I knew it! Just as I thought. The sign outside the bathroom was a trick done by the culprit!

I shouted with vigour.

"There was a cleaning in progress sign left outside toilets that weren't being cleaned! We can therefore deduce that the bathroom was used as a hiding spot for the killer. Mr. Owens, you only pretended to board the elevator and were actually hiding inside the bathroom, weren't you?"

Mr. Owens gave me a condescending look. It was like he was a different person from his usual gentlemanly persona.

"Hah! You can't make accusations like that using such a flimsy premise. I definitely got in

the elevator and returned to my office. Or can you prove otherwise?”

“Yes, of course.”

I gave a confident smile – but on the inside, I was anything but confident.

This is why I'd lined up my second witness. But I can't be sure if her testimony will expose Mr. Owens's lies.

And she's somewhat careless... I'm not even sure I'll get a straight testimony from her.

But I've got no option other than to rely on what she has to say.

The second witness took the witness stand.

“My name is Harriet Rush! I work for Pegasus Town's management team, third branch! I'm so excited, I've never been in a courtroom before! I may be inexperienced, but I'll do my best at giving testimony!”

Ms. Rush shouted in a loud voice, her expression just as excited as her words indicated.

The judge spoke.

“Ah... We can hear you without shouting. Please calm yourself and testify truthfully.”

“Yes sir! I'll give my all as a representative of Pegasus Town's management team, third branch! Section chief, branch director, watch me now! Rush, heading out!”

Ugh... Was it really a good idea to call her...? I'm not so sure now.

I spoke to Ms. Rush.

“Please describe your actions on the day of the incident in detail.”

“Yes sir! I woke up at 7:00 AM that day, I washed my face and made my lunch and I was planning to wear my favourite shirt, but I realised I hadn't ironed it, so I went and got the iron...!”

“N-no, I think we can skip this part. I heard you dropped your pass case in the elevator? Around what time was that?”

“The time... Uh... I can't really remember. It was probably around 11:00 or 12:00... or maybe 1:00?”

That's way too vague!

I'll try sending a lifeboat.

“You dropped your pass case at the time you answered a phone call, I believe?”

“Ah, yeah, that's right.”

“Which means if you check the call log on your cell phone, you should be able to

determine the time?”

“Ah, that's right! You're smart, Mr. Lawyer!”

Ms. Rush pulled her phone from her bag in a rush, causing her purse, make up pouch and a paperback to fall on the floor, she hastily picked everything up and finally checked her phone.

“Ah, got it! I received the call at 12:48 PM!”

– All right. Just as I'd suspected.

I told Ms. Rush she could leave the stand now (to her great disappointment...), and once again requested testimony from Mr. Owens.

“Mr. Owens, you said you got in the elevator at 12:55 PM and returned to your office?”

“... Yes.”

The smile had vanished from Mr. Owens's face.

“Shortly before that at 12:48 PM, Ms. Rush dropped her pass case in there. Did you not see the dropped pass case when you entered the elevator?”

“Well... How about this. Perhaps someone picked it up before I entered the elevator.”

“No.”

I shook my head.

“The pass case was later returned to Ms. Rush. An elevator maintenance man found and handed it in.”

“Which means from that moment until the maintenance began at 1:00 PM, the pass case was on the elevator floor. If you really were in the elevator, wouldn't it be strange to have not noticed the pass case in there?”

“Ah... Sorry, I remember now.”

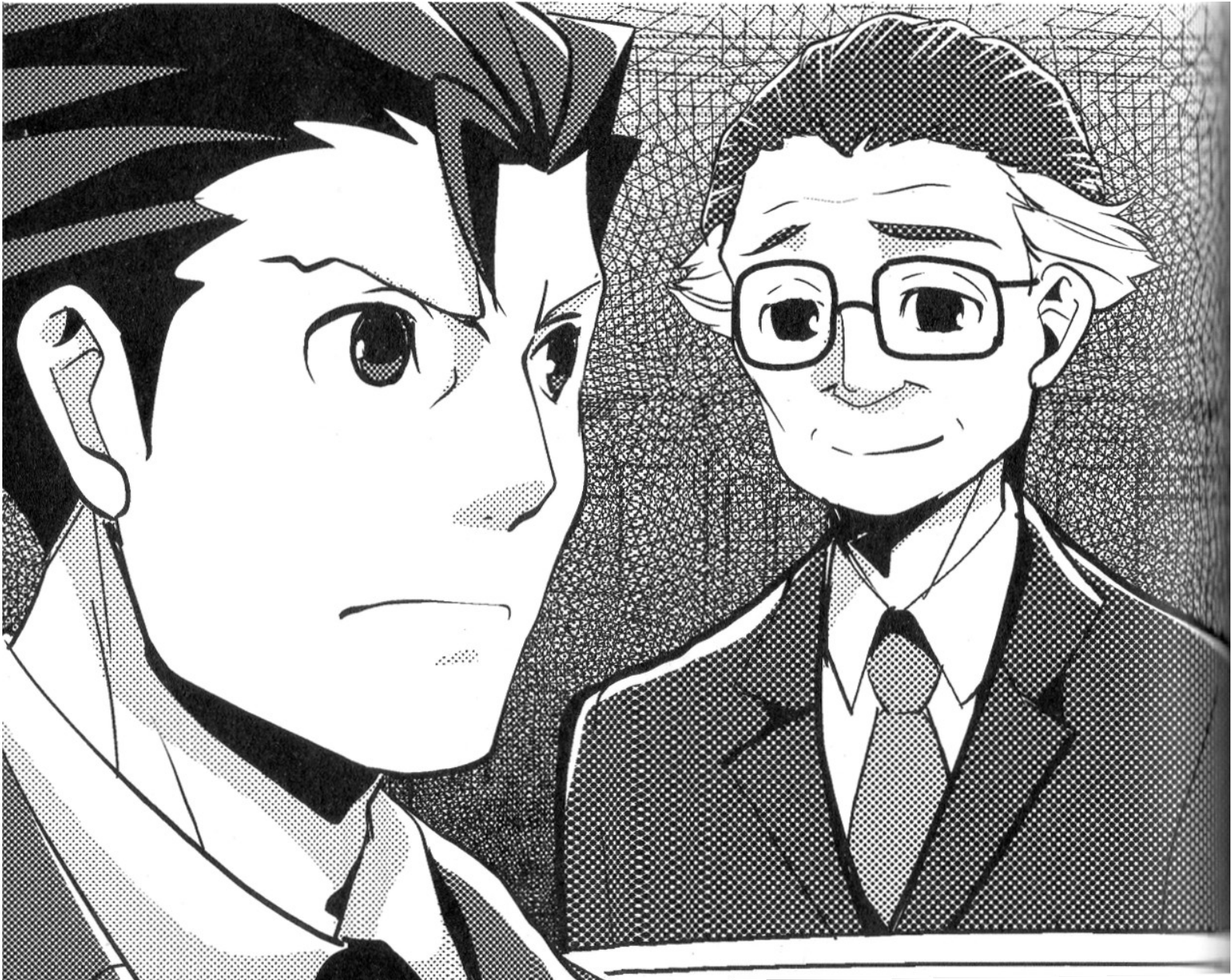
The confident smile returned to Mr. Owens's face.

“I did see it lying there. But since I was in a rush, I didn't pick it up.”

“You just left it lying there?”

“My deepest apologies. I was so busy that day I wouldn't have time to deliver a lost item to management.”

“Mr. Owens, you...”



“I definitely saw it. It was a pink pass case with a black cat design, correct?”

“...!”

After confidently pressing for answers, I found myself lost for words.

... That's right. Mr. Owens perfectly described the pass case.

Prosecutor Blackquill spoke.

“There's no room for doubt. The owner went into the elevator and returned to his office.

He's unrelated to the incident.”

No way...

I thought the thing with the pass case would be enough to prove he hadn't used the elevator... But he's turned it to his own advantage...

Prosecutor Blackquill spoke to solidify his stance.

“Besides, we have decisive evidence the owner was not involved in the crime. It seems you've overlooked it.”

“... What is this decisive evidence...?”

“Look at his right hand.”

I suddenly realised. Mr. Owens nodded in satisfaction and held up his right hand.

“It's as the prosecutor says. My right hand is injured. Do you really think I could hold a knife and stab a man like this?”

Mr. Owens's right hand was wrapped in bandages...

“I'm sure I told you. I accidentally cut myself the day before the incident while cooking.”

“That's...”

I recall Mr. Owens awkwardly using his left hand to give me his business card, open doors, etc.

“That's... What if... you're actually left handed...”

“No, I'm right handed. Just ask my secretary. Her testimony would confirm that.”

... There's no point in asking. Not if he's that confident.

“If you are right handed, isn't it strange to have cut your right hand with the kitchen knife? If you were holding the knife with your right hand, then you shouldn't have cut it...”

He elegantly brushed aside my desperate remark.

“I was completely careless. I dropped the knife on the floor and in a panic picked it up by the blade.”

“Ooh... It's painful just thinking of it.”

The judge shuddered.

Mr. Owens began removing his bandages.

“I can show you if you still doubt me. I'm sure you'll be able to tell if I could hold a knife in this hand.”

There was indeed a large wound beneath the bandages. There was a deep cut at the base of his thumb. There's no way he could hold anything like that.

“Th-That's enough. The witness will reapply his bandages!”

The judge covered his eyes.

“Surely you're satisfied. Prolonging this trial any further is a waste of time.”

Prosecutor Blackquill stated.

The judge still had his doubts.

“Perhaps so... Is there anything else the defence would like to address...?”

“Hey, Your Honor. I'm sure your grandkid is waiting for you to come home.”

Prosecutor Blackquill's tone suddenly became kindly.

“...!”

“If you head home now, I'm sure you'll have plenty of time to play together this afternoon?”

What the hell is that? You can't play the grandchild card!

However it seems as though the judge had been swayed.

“Understood. I shall hand down my verdict.”

“Objection!”

I raised my voice in a panic.

“We haven't uncovered the full truth of this case yet. There's a contradiction in the witness' testimony!”

“Oho. Well then, the defence should point this contradiction out for us.”

The judge put down the gavel he was holding.

My claim of a contradiction had been a bluff to buy time. If I'd remained silent, the verdict would have been given.

I'm backed right against the wall. Calm yourself, Phoenix Wright... If Mr. Owens is the culprit, he had to be lying. There has to be a contradiction somewhere in his words.

I went back over all the details Mr. Owens had spoken about.

– I was completely careless. I dropped the knife on the floor and in a panic picked it up by the blade.

... Something about that bugs me. Is there something wrong with that statement...?

No, the statement itself isn't contradictory. What's bothering me is...

I'm sure I heard something similar recently.

– I'm always doing that, careless really. My secretary would scold me if she knew.

The bitter laugh in Mr. Owens's voice returned to my mind.

It was when I went to the owner's office. There were traces of something having been wiped off the floor...

I've got it. That's what's bugging me. Mr. Owens had already made a huge mistake!

“Mr. Owens. There were traces of something that had been wiped up on your office floor.

I almost slipped over on it, do you recall?”

“... Yes. So what? It was just some coffee I had spilled. I'm so careless...”

“What was spilled isn't the issue.”

I shook my head.

“It's the fact it was wiped up. You'd have to bend down on your hands and knees and use a cloth to wipe it up.”

“How did you bend down? You couldn't do anything with your right hand?”

Mr. Owens took a moment to swallow his breath. Then continued calmly.

“Oh, is that all? I used a mop of course. I can still use a mop using only my left hand...”

“So the owner's office is supplied with a mop. Shall we have your secretary confirm that?”

“...!”

For the first time, Mr. Owens's expression became flustered.

– Alright. It was an all or nothing gamble, but it seems to have paid off. The moment he mentioned having a mop it was all over.

“Your bluffs are as lucky as always, Mr. Wright!”

Athena showed her admiration. Luck or not, it's time to push this door all the way open.

“Mr. Owens. At that time, your right hand wasn't yet injured. You conspicuously wrapped bandages around it and made a deliberate effort not to use your right hand. The wound was deliberately self inflicted after the incident.”

Mr. Owens went pale. He opened his mouth slightly, but what came out was not his usual smooth voice, but a wordless groaning noise.

The judge harshly enquired.

“Answer the question, witness. Was your wound deliberately self inflicted after the incident?”

“... So what...”

“Eh?”

“SO WHAT IF I DID, HUH!?”

The loud voice reverberated through the courtroom. Everyone froze in an instant.

Mr. Owens immediately realised his error. He promptly cleared his throat and rephrased himself.

“—Excuse me. What I actually meant to say was this. Yes, I did deliberately cut my own right hand.”

... Oh? He's just admitting it like that...?

“However, so what if I did? Is cutting your own hand a crime now?”

“Eh...”

“It was myself I harmed, not anyone else? So what?”

Mr. Owens puffed his chest. H-he's really pushing it now...

I enquired, somewhat taken aback.

“But why would you do that? Obviously, it would have to be to create a situation where you can claim you were unable to commit the murder...?”

“Wrong. I was simply fed up with work.”

Mr. Owens sighed.

“Day in, day out, looking over mountains of documents, taking care of various issues... I was tired of it. I thought that if I had an injury I could take a break from it all.”

“N-no way.”

“It was a stupid idea. I must have been possessed.”

Mr. Owens had completely regained his calm and once again smiled.

That's ridiculous! There's limits to how far you can push it.

“But that's strange, Mr. Owens! I mean, why were you wearing the bandages before the incident? You hadn't wounded yourself yet.”

“Ah, that's simple. The day before the incident I tried cutting myself. However I chickened out and only left a shallow cut. It wasn't enough to impair my hand, but I bandaged it up anyway. I later decided that it wasn't enough and made a deeper cut.”

This is getting ridiculous. This isn't remotely plausible!

However, Prosecutor Blackquill interjected. Glaring daggers at Mr. Owens.

“... There is no crime in cutting your own hand. A mere eccentricity. Well, Your Honor?”

“Indeed. I concur that it is not a crime... But... I would suggest you don't try this at home.”

The judge answered.

“There's no problem then. Hand down the verdict already.”

“Objection!”

I slammed the desk.

All my doubts turned to convictions. Mr. Owens is definitely suspicious.

However – no matter how suspicious he is, I can't do anything without evidence. There has to... There just has to be a contradiction somewhere...

“What is the nature of your objection, defence? Please state yourself clearly.”

“That's... Well...”

I was at a loss for words.

There's got to be a contradiction. But where...!?

Prosecutor Blackquill spoke up.

“Pay him no heed. This is just another one of Wright-dono's trademark bluffs.”

“...!”

“It's time for a verdict, Your Honor. It's time to give word to your experience and reasoning.”

“Experience... and reasoning. Hoho.”

The judge nodded happily. Not good...



He's totally taken in by Prosecutor Blackquill's psychological manipulation...

The judge grasped his gavel. If he brings it down, it's all over. He's about to render judgement on Ms. Cutter...!

“Hold it...!”

I shouted without realising. The judge's hand stopped.

“Is there still something left, defence?”

“There's some vague points in Mr. Owens's testimony! I'd like one more chance to go into further detail!”

It was a desperate ploy for time – it was the only thing I could come up with to keep struggling along. But I'll keep holding on for dear life.

Owner Owens spoke with a triumphant expression.

“I hate to continually be repeating the same thing over and over... But I'm willing to play along. I'll gladly testify as long as I have to in order to satisfy Mr. Wright.”

Mr. Owens continued calmly.

“When Mr. Wright and I went our separate ways, I used the elevator to my office on the top floor. That was at 12:55 PM. It's been proven I rode the elevator since I was able to identify the pass case in there. If I hadn't been inside the elevator, I wouldn't have been able to identify the colour or design of the pass case.”

“...”

“I was working the whole time in my office. Mr. Wright came by just before 2:00 PM. It was while I was discussing an event taking place next month with Mr. Wright, that the call informing me of the incident came.”

“–The elevator was undergoing maintenance until 1:50 PM.”

Prosecutor Blackquill added in. I nodded silently.

“The first one on the elevator when service was restored was you yourself, Wright-dono.”

“... That's right.”

“When you arrived in the owner's office, the owner was already there. If he's the culprit, then how did he get back there before you did?”

... Right. That's the biggest problem.

If Mr. Owens is the culprit, then after committing the crime, he somehow got back to his office on the 17th floor ahead of me.

A way of reaching the 17th floor quicker than the elevator... If I can figure that out...

“Owner, did you climb to the 17th floor using the stairs?”

Mr. Owens simply laughed in response to Prosecutor Blackquill.

“Of course not! I haven't got the stamina for that. I'd be collapsing by the time I reached the third floor.”

Laughter spread through the gallery.

He's right... Climbing to the 17th floor by the stairs is unrealistic.

He wasn't in the elevator and he didn't climb the stairs...

Some other way to return to the 17th floor before me... Does such a thing exist?

Prosecutor Blackquill spoke.

“He had no means of escape. Therefore the owner couldn't have done it. Wright-dono's claims are naught but a fantasy. There's no plausible suspects other than the defendant, Melody Cutter!”

“—It seems so.”

The judge nodded.

“Does the defence have any further objections?”

“...”

I remained silent. Athena looked at me desperately.

“Mr. Wright...! You have to say something... He's going to end the trial!”

“...”

No matter how hard I think, there was no way to get up to the 17th floor before me without using the elevator.

Is this the end? Am I really unable to do anything to save Ms. Cutter...?

No, not yet. I can't give in yet.

I've been in this kind of situation before. This isn't the first or second time I've dealt with absolute desperation. I've pulled through before.

— I need to turnabout my way of thinking.

That's my trump card. I've overturned countless hopeless seeming situations with this method. I'll turn things around this time too. Rather than thinking about how the culprit could return to the 17th floor without using the elevator – I need to think about how he could have used the elevator!

I wasn't alone in the elevator at the time. There was another person who got in the elevator with me.

Right. They're the only one who could have used the elevator...!

“There was someone else other than myself in the elevator.”

I spoke, the judge stopping his hand just before swinging his gavel.

“What was what?”

“A cleaner. A mask covered their face and they never once looked up. If that cleaner was the real culprit, then everything makes sense.”

“Another new suspect?”

Prosecutor Blackquill gave a sarcastic smile. Mr. Owens also laughed.

“Sounds like a strong suspect. Should we track down this cleaner before we continue the trial, Mr. Wright?”

“There's no need. That cleaner is right in front of me.”

“... Say what?”

“Mr. Owens. The cleaner was actually yourself in disguise, wasn't it?”

Commotion flooded the courtroom. The judge, seemingly having forgotten about his gavel, stared



blankly.

He was brought back to his senses by Mr. Owens's loud laughing voice.

“Hahaha...! What utter nonsense... A total delusion! Try and be more realistic, Mr. Wright.”

“De-defence, please remain within reason.”

The judge blinked incessantly as he looked at me.

“I do believe Prosecutor Blackquill alluded to this cleaner the other day. The cleaner was female... wasn't she?”

“The cleaner was dressed like a woman. But their hair was covered with a cap and their face covered with a mask.”

Yes. That's the answer.

I looked straight at Mr. Owens.

“Mr. Owens. You were an aspiring performer in your younger days. For a petite man such as yourself, disguising yourself as a woman would be child's play.”

“You can't accuse me based on that!”

Mr. Owens's voice became rougher as he glared at me.

“You changed into the cleaner's uniform in the bathroom, probably with some kind of coat on top to protect yourself from blood splatter and committed the crime. I'm assuming you broke the locker in advance. Then you'd be sure Mr. Ukulfaskul wouldn't use it. You hid in the locker, waiting for your chance, attacking him the moment Ms. Cutter left the room.”

“Ri... diculous... You have no proof...”

“After the crime. You hid your coat in the cleaning bucket, covered your face with a mask and went to use the elevator. However there was someone you weren't expecting there. Me.”

“...”

Mr. Owens gave up speaking and looked at me with pitiful eyes.

“On top of that, I asked where the owner's office was. You were panicked. You had to return to your office before I could somehow... So you bought some time by telling me to get off at the wrong floor. You rushed to your office, removed your disguise and in your rush accidentally got some blood from your coat on the floor. As soon as you finished wiping it up, I knocked on your door...”

“That's enough, Wright-dono.”

A deep voice echoed. Prosecutor Blackquill glared at me with intense bloodlust.

“Don't let your delusions run wild...”

“They aren't delusions! I've just revealed the true culprit's escape route. The mystery of the bathroom cleaning sign, the mystery of the opened empty locker, it explains everything.”

“Silence!”

I instinctively flinched as Prosecutor Blackquill shouted.

Despite just being a shout, it had the forcefulness of a slashing katana.

“Can you stop repeating yourself over and over? It was impossible for the owner to commit the crime. It's been made quite clear that he entered the elevator right after you parted ways with him!”

“It's as the prosecutor said.”

Mr. Owens nodded.

As a result of having gotten worked up several times already, his hair and clothing were a mess. He made an attempt at regaining his gentlemanly composure, but he had a bloodshot glare in his eyes.

“I saw the pass case of a female employee inside the elevator. It was pink with a black cat design, if I wasn't in the elevator I couldn't know this.”

I slammed both my hands on my desk and looked at Mr. Owens.

“You saw the dropped pass case and never bothered to pick it up?”

“Yes, that's right. I told you. I had mountains of work to do, so I was too busy.”

“You couldn't have even given it to your secretary?”

“There was no need for that! I told you, I was busy!”

“You have a reputation of normally being a kind and considerate man. Isn't it somewhat out of character for you to turn a blind eye to someone's lost property?”

“Stop poking your nose in! It's none of your business!”

Mr. Owens was now irritated.

“If it was something important, I would've picked it up. But that pass case was filled with nothing but point cards. There was no need to consider it a priority!”

“...”

I let out a soft sigh. Mr. Owens turned away, considering the matter settled as he began straightening his ruffled hair.

“Why do you know the contents of the pass case? Ms. Rush never mentioned anything

about what was inside during her testimony.”

“That's... obvious from just looking at it!”

“You saw what was inside? Despite your claim just a minute ago that you 'didn't pick it up'?”

“I didn't pick it up and hand it in is what I said. I picked it up long enough to just check what was inside!”

“In that case, let's check it for fingerprints.”

The moment I said that, Mr. Owens's expression changed.

The mask of a gentleman was peeled off. What I saw underneath was – a demon filled with anger and hatred, his true face.

It was clear from this expression. We don't even need to check. Mr. Owens's fingerprints will not be found on the pass case.

“You never touched the pass case. Yet, you know its contents. There's only one explanation.”

“...”

“You heard Ms. Rush talking with a colleague. A conversation in which she clearly mentioned the colour, design and contents of her pass case. The conversation she had in the elevator with myself and the cleaner present.”

Mr. Owens went as pale as a sheet. His wide open eyes filled with anger.

“The only ones to hear that conversation were myself and the cleaner. Mr. Owens, you were the cleaner – therefore the one who killed Mr. Ukulfaskul...”

I pointed a finger at Mr. Owens.

“... is you!”

The courtroom suddenly became quiet enough to hear a pin drop. Nobody moved a muscle. All eyes were on Mr. Owens.

Prosecutor Blackquill was silent. The uncomfortable silence focused on Mr. Owens.

Mr. Owens began to tremble. His carefully prepared outward appearance of a gentleman crumbled slowly for all to see.

“So...”

Mr. Owens gave me an intense glare as he groaned in a rough voice.



He slammed the witness stand with both hands.

His outburst continued right up until the bailiffs came to subdue him.

As he was dragged from the room, the courtroom returned to its silence.

The judge turned his eyes to the defendant's seat and spoke solemnly.

“–The truth of this matter has been made clear. I will now hand down my verdict. I declare the defendant, Melody Cutter, Not Guilty!”

Trucy was the first to stand in the gallery.

Ms. Cutter lifted her face, and for the first time, gave a radiant smile befitting an idol.

Chapter 9. Truth of the incident

[June 23, 11:00 AM: Prosecutor's Office]

The next day, I went to the prosecutor's office.

The case has been resolved, but there's still a few missing details. Like the motive.

Why would Mr. Owens, the owner of a shopping mall living a comfortable life, feel the need to kill Mr. Ukulfaskul? What connects the two of them?

The Chief Prosecutor is a busy man. I was expecting a long wait, but surprisingly it didn't take long for Edgeworth to let me into his office.

“—Mr. Owens confessed everything. His motive and method.”

Edgeworth began speaking the moment I sat down on the sofa. He sat at his desk, continuing to sign official documents as he spoke.

... I felt like I was being told to hurry up and leave already. I felt quite unwelcome. Well, not that I'd expect Edgeworth's office to be a welcoming place anyway.

“What was his motive?”

“Revenge.”

Edgeworth stated bluntly as he flipped through documents, not even glancing at me.

“About a year ago, Mr. Owens's dog was killed by a motorbike while he was on a walk. It was a hit and run, but Mr. Owens hired a detective, handed out fliers and did various other things to track down the culprit.”

“... So the culprit...?”

“Yes. It was Ukulfaskul.”

I recall Mr. Owens saying he 'lost his family a year ago'. So he was talking about his pet dog...

“Living on his own, the dog was an irreplaceable family member to Mr. Owens. However, even when he reported it to the police, there was no serious charge placed for an accident involving a pet. This was unacceptable to Mr. Owens. Which lead to him planning out his murder scheme.”

“... And the reason Ms. Cutter was framed...”

“Undue resentment due to a misunderstanding.”

Edgeworth knit his brow slightly.

“At the same time the dog was hit, a single car was passing by. It immediately stopped, but as soon as they realised there were no human casualties, they sped off. The concerned passer-by who looked out of the window...”

“It wasn't...?”

“It was. Melody Cutter.”

Good grief. So Ms. Cutter was a witness to the accident.

“We spoke with Melody Cutter about this, but she doesn't recall the incident. We got a statement from her manager, Mr. Porter, though. 'We passed by immediately following the accident, we never saw the accident itself though. It was clear the owner was shouting something, but we were in a hurry so we didn't bother stopping.'”

“... So Mr. Owens recognised the idol singer Melody Cutter inside the car.”

“That's right. She has quite a distinctive look. Owens contacted Melody Cutter's agency countless times seeking a witness statement, but was continually refused. The agency considered the constant calls to be a prank caller. After all, Melody Cutter had not actually witnessed an accident.”

“... I see.”

“However, Owens believed she was deliberately avoiding providing a statement. That a dog's life was far too trivial and bothersome to involve herself with... He simply made these assumptions about Melody Cutter's character.”

“That's quite a baseless grudge.”

“Mm. It was quite convenient to Owens that she used a knife in her performance. He could kill Ukulfaskul and frame Cutter for it... He planned the live event specifically to kill both birds with one stone.”

“... How terrible.”

“Then it turned out that Ms. Cutter was actually being blackmailed by Ukulfaskul. Hearing this from inside the locker, Owens practically jumped for joy. Everything was going his way, as if a divine force were supporting him.”

“—Divine punishment, huh?”

I recalled the position Mr. Ukulfaskul's corpse was posed in. Owens had put the body into that pose after committing the murder.

I remembered what he said to me.

(... When the truth is buried in darkness and evil people slip through the law's net, living carefree lives... It's quite unforgivable...)

“Owens was unable to overlook it. He rendered punishment in place of the gods upon the man who killed his dog and ran...”

Edgeworth gave a surprisingly quick response to my mumbling.

“Punishment rendered by humans can never be considered divine.”

“...”

“It's still a heinous crime. No matter what his reasons were.”

“Edgeworth...”

“Criminals should receive their judgement in the hands of the law, not through personal vengeance.”

“... Yeah.”

His phrasing was somewhat stiff, but Edgeworth's words embedded themselves deeply.

Despite being in a dark age of the law... Or rather, because of this era, I have to keep pressing onwards.

I need to use the official laws – to ensure fair judgements.

[June 23, 12:20 PM: Burger Shop]

Upon my return to the office, we all went out to the local burger shop.

“The burger after solving a case! Nothing beats it!”

Athena's voice boomed.

“Agreed. It really is the best.”

Apollo had quite an appetite worked up. Trucy made her order first.

“Cheeseburger, with extra cheese!”

“I'll have a bacon burger then.”

While we waited for the burgers, Trucy addressed me in an unusually formal manner.

“Nice work, daddy. Thank you so much. You saved Melody.”

“I was just doing my job as an attorney. Anyway...”

I momentarily found myself lost for words.

The case has been resolved, but Ms. Cutter's real trials are only beginning. With her father's cheating brought to light, society may start looking down on her. She may not be able to maintain her image as a bright and cheerful idol.

“Daddy...”

Trucy picked up on my concern. Her expression became somewhat melancholy.

– But then it happened.

Some incredibly bubbly music began to play. It was coming from the TV mounted under the store's ceiling.

On the screen was a close up of Ms. Cutter with a great smile.

She had her knife in one hand and a melon in the other. Next to her was a dressed up table. As she sang, Ms. Cutter tossed the melon up in the air.

The next moment she brandished her knife in the blink of an eye.

“...!?”

She sliced the melon to pieces in mid air...?

No, that's not right. The melon was on a plate on the table, carved into the shape of a beautiful flower.

Ms. Cutter flashed a smile and took a pose.

“A-amazing...”

Apollo murmured in a daze.

I was shocked too. It was my first time seeing it, her technique was even more incredible than I'd imagined... I guess that's the result of three hours practice every day.

“Melody seems to be in top form! What a relief!”

Athena boomed.

“Seems we don't have to worry.”

Trucy was pleased.

I was more overwhelmed than relieved. That's a top idol for you... No ordinary person would have the inner strength to smile like that after everything.

The order arrived.

“Here, thanks for waiting.”

The store's owner said, placing our burgers in front of us.

“Thank you. Time to eat!”

I was about to dig in...

But I stopped.

“... Wh-what is this!?”

Trucy, Athena and Apollo also paused.

The owner spoke looking at the TV.

“Melody sure is impressive... Fightin' against a blackmailin' demon to cover for her old man... Seein' her smile with such strength... It's a real inspiration...”

The owner wiped his tears.

... I see. Ms. Cutter's courage had grabbed him by the heart. It seems the match fixing scandal may have actually increased her fanbase.

“Um...”

As I opened my mouth, he quickly cut me off.

“Oh, but her old man on the other hand. To discover that big match was actually fixed, I can't forgive him for that. I'd like to give him a taste o' my own uppercut finisher!”

N-no, don't. He'd probably kick your ass.

“But his daughter is innocent. It just makes me wanna cheer Melody on... So I decided to put some practice into my fruit cuttin'...”

“Uh, well... About... that...”

My bacon burger has a rabbit shaped apple as a topping!

“My burger has a kiwi rose in it...” Trucy said.

“I've got a heart shaped strawberry!” Athena added.

“I've got a baby chick made of... pineapple.” Apollo responded.

“... Heheh.”

The owner puffed up with pride.

“I ain't as good as Melody... but I put my heart into those. Consider those toppings on the house, enjoy your meal.”

... Maybe I'd be happy if he'd carved a pickle instead.

The four of us glared at the owner with sullen eyes.

“What's with that look? If you wanna say something, then say it.”

The four of us shouted together.

“-Objection!”



Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney – Turnabout Idol

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